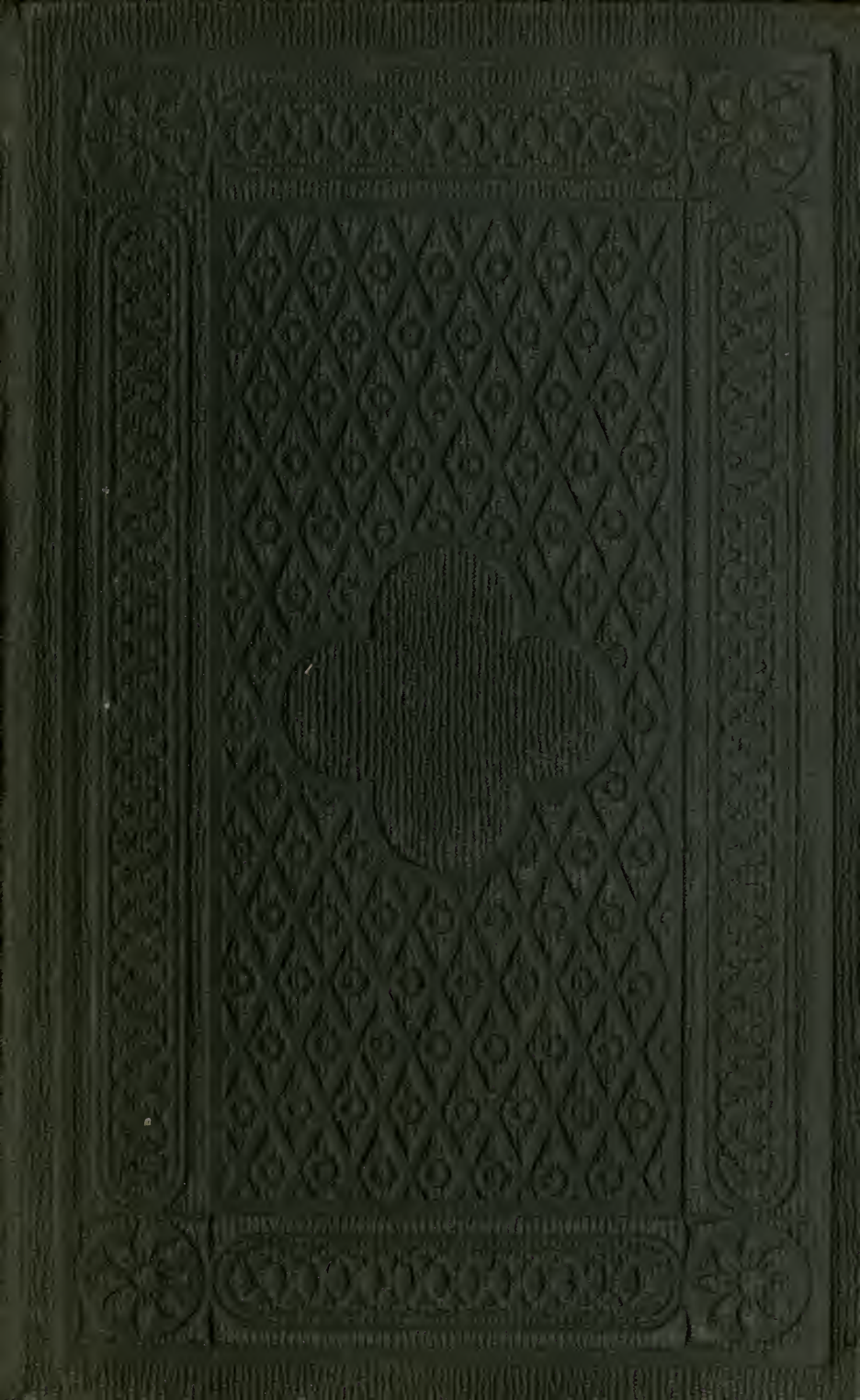

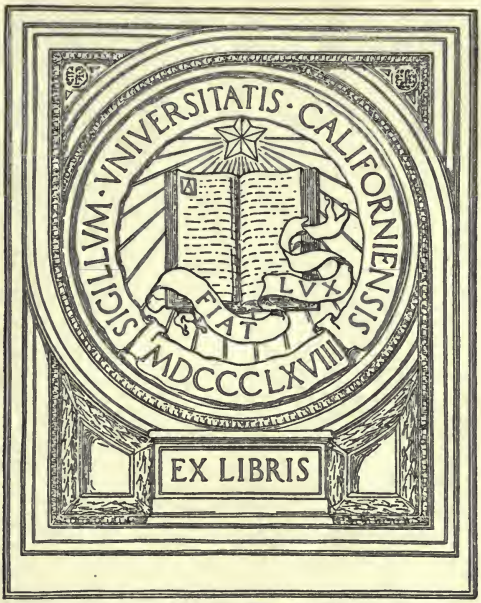
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MABEL VAUGHAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE LAMPLIGHTER."

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MABEL VAUGHAN.

CHAPTER I.

Fear is the virtue of slaves; but the heart that loveth is willing;
Perfect was, before God, and perfect is Love, and Love only.
LONGFELLOW'S TEGNER.

ON a pleasant midsummer's afternoon, a middle-aged lady, with a mild and thoughtful face, sat alone in her quiet parlor, busily engaged in sewing. It was a country home in which she dwelt, and her low window opened directly into a green and sloping orchard, now fragrant with new-mown hay, the sweet breath of which was borne in on every passing breeze. She was a woman of many cares, and but little leisure, and for more than an hour had not lifted her eyes from her work, when, suddenly attracted by the merry voices of children, she arrested herself in the act of setting a stitch, and, with her needle still poised between finger and thumb, leaned her elbow on the window-sill and for several minutes gazed earnestly and attentively upon a little group collected beneath an opposite tree. They were too far off for their words to be distinguishable, but happiness shone in their faces, mirth rang in their careless shout, and joy danced in all their motions. Whether chasing the light butterfly, pelting each other with tufts of hay, or, in the very exuberance of their spirits, scampering without purpose or rest in the sunshine, they were in every view pictures of infant glee, cheering and happy sights to a mother's heart. Though now and then smiling on their sport, however, the gentle-faced lady at the window was watching them with a

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more thoughtful and observant gaze than the occasion seemed to warrant, for she saw amid their play what a less careful eye might have failed to discern, and from it she drew a moral.

Three among this little group, were her own children; but while they shared her notice, and from time to time excited her sympathy in their innocent enjoyment, it was not by them that her thoughts were at this time peculiarly engrossed.

There was among them a fourth, who, although not hers by the tie of nature, might almost be said to have become so by adoption, since she had now been three years under her roof, with the prospect of continuing there for an indefinite period; and it was on this little girl, who stood to her in the relation of a pupil, that the teacher's thoughtful attention was fixed.

She was between eleven and twelve years of age, and the eldest of the little band; a bright, rosy-checked, animated child, of a lively, adventurous spirit, the invariable leader in every youthful pastime. But on the present occasion she seemed only partially to share in the sport, for after every outburst of glee in which she indulged, far outdoing her companions in extravagant merriment, and inciting them to new hilarity, she would hastily resume her seat at the foot of an old apple-tree, snatch a well-worn book from the grass where she had thrown it, and appear for a time wholly engrossed in study. Her fits of diligence, however, were but short lived. At the first temptation held out by her companions, she would again fling aside the volume, spring to her feet, and bound with them to the farthest corner of the orchard, from which excursion she would return, heated, weary, and out of breath. Now a mischievous urchin had stolen her bonnet, and dared her to its recovery; and now a pet rabbit had just rushed past, and she must follow with the others in full pursuit. It was in vain that after each fresh interruption she applied herself anew to her lesson, and placing her fingers to her ears, strove to shut out the bewildering voices of her playmates. The effort, after all, was but a mock endeavor, for her heart was anywhere but in her book; and, at length, an unseen hand having snatched the much abused grammar from her lap and thrown it over the

boundary wall, the unwilling student felt a sense of relief at its disappearance, and was the first to raise the shout of approval that succeeded.

Just at this moment a bell sounded, and with a glance of surprise and alarm in the direction of the house, the girl hastened to recover the book and proceed to her recitation, for which this was the signal.

She came into the presence of her instructress with a flushed face, and, in place of her recent smiles, a half-mortified, half-vexed expression.

The teacher took the book from her pupil's hand without comment, and commenced hearing the lesson, which, as may well be supposed, proved a failure in the very onset.

The child stood in silence for a few moments, and then said, while tears of impatience rushed into her eyes, "I can't learn this lesson, Mrs. Herbert, it is too hard."

"You have not tried, Mabel," said Mrs. Herbert, mildly.

"Yes I have," answered Mabel; "I have tried just as hard as I could, and I can't learn it. I wish I need n't study Latin."

"Were you studying, my dear, when you lay for ten minutes hid in the hay, while the children tried in vain to find you, or when you stood on the highest bough of a cherry-tree and strained your eyes with looking into a robin's nest?"

Mabel gave a quick glance out of the window from whence she had thus been observed, then looked up into the friendly face of Mrs. Herbert, and seeing there a smile, which invited confidence and disarmed her of timidity, exclaimed, with natural and childlike frankness, "How could I study any better, when they were all having such a good time?"

"Ah! that is the true secret of the matter," said Mrs. Herbert, drawing Mabel towards her and wiping the moisture from the child's heated brow. "I have been watching you for this half hour, and knew very well how it would be with the lesson. Do you remember what I told you about it this morning?"

"You said it was hard, the hardest thing in the book."

"Not exactly, my dear; I told you, to be sure, that it was more difficult than any task you had yet attempted; but, at the

same time, I assured you that with a little patience you could quickly learn it, and that this verb once mastered, all the rest would seem comparatively easy. I did not promise, however, that you would find the orchard a good place to study in, or that the noise of the children would help you to fix your thoughts on your book. You should have gone to your own room, shut the door, and made up your mind to apply yourself diligently for an hour at least. Will you do so now?"

Mabel hesitated, gave a longing look at her recent playground, and then cast down her eyes, which were fast filling with tears.

After waiting in vain for a reply, Mrs. Herbert passed her arm round the waist of her pupil, fixed her mild eyes upon her face with a look which enforced attention, and gently but forcibly made use of such arguments as were most likely to excite her ambition and prompt her to the necessary effort. The girl was possessed of excellent capacity, but had not yet formed habits of application, and needed powerful motives to stimulate her to exertion. These Mrs. Herbert was able to supply, and soon had the satisfaction of witnessing the effect produced by her words, for Mabel gradually withdrew from her side, straightened her figure with a determined air, and exclaimed, with energy, "I suppose I *can* learn it, and I *will*."

"And remember," said Mrs. Herbert, as she bestowed a glance of affectionate interest and approval upon her hastily retreating pupil, "remember for your encouragement what I told you yesterday, that the more perfectly you learn this one lesson, the easier will every future task become."

It was the verb *amāre* — to love — of the first regular conjugation, and a formidable task did it appear in Mabel's eyes.

She was, however, possessed of an excellent memory, and every requisite for successful study, and bringing, as she now did, her whole heart to the labor, she was able in less than the allotted time, to overcome all its difficulties.

Before the hour had expired, she presented herself once more, grammar in hand, and her face bright with smiles, to beg that Mrs. Herbert would hear her recite, assuring her

that she knew every word perfectly, and had twice repeated the synopsis to herself without looking on the book. It was true, and the young student went triumphantly through the lesson.

"And see," exclaimed she, as, after receiving the praise her efforts had merited, she took the grammar from her teacher's hand, "it is just as you said. I have been looking at the verb that comes next, and it is so much like this that it will not be hard at all," and Mabel eagerly pointed out the tokens of similarity.

Mrs. Herbert, smiling at the little girl's earnestness, suggested still further marks of resemblance, congratulated Mabel upon the advantage she had gained, and then, laying her hand upon the child's shoulder, said, impressively, "And so it is with life, my dear Mabel. The great lesson of love once learned, learned patiently, truly, and with the whole heart, not carelessly scanned, or foolishly toyed with, but diligently received into the soul, and planted there forever — this lesson will relieve all life's trials and illumine all its mysteries. But, believe me, my child, it is seldom learned amid life's sunshine and its joy. Its teachings come to us in the silent chambers of thought, when noise is shut out, and the voice of mirth for a time is stilled, and eager pleasure gives place to patient duty. While chasing the butterflies of folly, or wasting the summer hours in play, we cannot take life's great lesson to heart; but, planted perhaps in sorrow, and nourished perhaps in tears, it will one day blossom in joy and peace. Rouse yourself to this last lesson, Mabel, bring to it your soul's best powers, pursue it with the energy which has been victorious to-day, and I shall have no fear for your future."

Mabel did not quite understand at the time, the full force of these spontaneous words, which, prompted by earnest feeling, took rather the form of soliloquy, than an address suited to the child's years. But they were not lost upon her. Like seeds of future promise, they were planted in her young heart; memory kept them warm, and at last, matured by time, they brought forth fruits unto righteousness.

And once again. When Mabel had reached her eighteenth year, and the summons had at length been received, which was to call the pupil from the teacher who, during more than half of the young girl's existence, had been to her less an instructress than a parent, words of a similar import were the last warning and the last charge which fell from the revered lips of age and experience upon the listening ear of youth.

"Learn above all things, my dear girl," said Mrs Herbert, as they sat together the evening before Mabel's departure, "to beware of self-love, and cultivate to the utmost degree a universal charity. It is the best advice I can give you for your safety, and the surest for your happiness."

"Do you think me so selfish then?" exclaimed Mabel, half grieved at the implication conveyed in her teacher's words. "Oh, there are so many whom I love better than myself!"

"I accuse you of no unamiable quality, my dear Mabel, and your generosity has always been proverbial among us; but, when I charge you to cultivate love for others, even to the forgetfulness of self, you must not misunderstand my meaning. It is because it is so easy and natural to you, my dear child, to love all and everybody, that I wish to warn you of a time, when, instead of being your happiness, and so demanding of you no sacrifice, it may become your trial and your misery; and it is then that I bid you love on as woman can and must. O, Mabel, there is nothing so insidious as self-love, nothing so noble and so womanly as that divine love which finds its happiness in duty."

Mrs Herbert's voice trembled with emotion as she spoke, and had anything been wanting to impress her words upon Mabel's heart, that want would have been supplied when she looked in the face of her revered friend, and felt that the lesson she was now so earnestly imparting, was one taught her by experience and proved by faithful practice.

Amid the pain of parting with old friends, and the joys and hopes attendant upon her entrance into a new home, this lesson, and that equally impressive one of her early childhood which it had served to call up, were both for a time effaced

from Mabel's recollection. But they were not lost. There are lessons which penetrate our hearts like Heaven-sent whisperings, lessons, simply spoken, scarce heeded when uttered, but proving by their deep and lasting influence that they have their source in the eternal fountain of truth.

And so it was with these simple teachings of a faithful, true-hearted woman. It was not the power with which they were spoken, it was not eloquence nor a passion-stirring voice, nor was it the effect of time or circumstance, that stamped them so indelibly on Mabel's heart, but nevertheless they struck upon a chord within, which thrilled at the word, and vibrating through many years, reminded her again and again of the Heavenly lesson which her soul needed for its purification.

It was long before the page fully unfolded itself on which that lesson of love was written, and only by years of patient striving were its difficulties overcome; but often amid the struggle did memory whisper in Mabel's ear the encouraging assurance, that this task once learned, the rest of life's path would be made easy.

And is it not so? Is not woman's mission truly a mission of love? And can she fail to fulfil all its duties nobly, and find all its trials lightened and relieved when she has once taken to heart that lesson, once fortified herself with that spirit so beautifully exemplified in Him whose life on earth was a glorious manifestation of love made perfect?

CHAPTER II.

A lovely being scarcely formed or moulded,
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded.

BYRON.

MABEL Vaughan was the daughter of a New York merchant, a man of remarkable business capacity, undoubted integrity, and reputed wealth; one who although of highly respectable parentage, good education, and fair advantages for a start in life, had nevertheless been in a great degree the framer of his own fortunes, having passed through all the phases incident to the accumulation of a large property.

While thus sacrificing his youth, however, and with it all his best and noblest powers to the pursuit of wealth, he found no opportunity for the forming of domestic ties, and it was not until he was fast verging upon middle life that he even meditated matrimony. He had by this time gained that point in the social scale, when he was marked as a rising man of wide commercial influence, and this distinction, together with his gentlemanly bearing, found him favor in the eyes of a beautiful and fashionable woman, whose fair face had captivated his fancy, and whose family connection was such as to gratify his ambition.

There was between them no similarity of taste or habit, however, and the union which succeeded their short acquaintance, was productive of but little happiness to either party. Mr. Vaughan had hoped to find at his own fireside that quiet and relaxation from care, of which he had experienced the want, and failing in this, he sought amid the speculation and excitement of business to forget the disappointment he had experienced in his home, while his wife, after pursuing for a time those gaieties which her husband refused to share, became

the victim, first, of complaining self-indulgence, and finally of positive ill health.

Fatal as this utter want of sympathy proved to the welfare of the ill-assorted pair, its consequences were still more injurious to their children, especially to the eldest, a daughter, who from infancy to womanhood was exposed to all its unfortunate influences. At the birth of this little girl, Mr. Vaughan's interests and affections were again turned from his counting-house, to centre in the home where he once more began to meditate upon those fireside and domestic joys which had always figured in his dreams of married life. But his wife did not share these fond aspirations, and the child proving an insufficient object to win her from a course of dissipated gayety, was soon abandoned to the care of strangers, save as the father strove at intervals, by fond and injudicious indulgence to atone for the mother's neglect. During six succeeding years, this daughter continued the sole occupant of the nursery, and the sole victim of her parent's mismanagement. At the end of that time a boy, and, a few years after, another girl were added to the household. Louise, however, the eldest, was by this time promoted to the companionship of her mother, who now become a restless and nervous invalid, sought to divert her mind with the pretty and graceful child, whose education and accomplishments she resolved herself to superintend. And the result of such superintendence was this. Louise, at sixteen was a fine dancer, a tolerably skilful musician, and a complete mistress of all the arts of coquetry. Nature had given her a pretty face, and symmetry of form, and early practice had taught her to turn both to good account. Despite her youth, too, she had, by sedulous cultivation, acquired many so-called fascinations of manner, which acted powerfully upon those who shut their eyes to her extreme affectation; and her utter want of mental and moral discipline was atoned for in the eyes of her mother's circle of friends, by a natural quickness of intellect, and a proverbial amiability of disposition.

These latter qualities, however, so far as she in reality possessed them, were given her at birth. They could not be

numbered among her acquirements, for unfortunately her heart, mind, and soul had been quite overlooked in her education.

Such being the consequence of the mother's supervision, it could scarcely be a matter of regret that Harry and Mabel were, for the most part, shut out from her presence and her care. Harry was so noisy, and his little sister had adopted so many of his rude ways, that both were unfit for her sacred precincts, even if she had considered them of a suitable age to profit by her instruction; and as it was, she condemned them wholly to the care of a newly-hired nurse.

Fortunately this nurse, though ignorant, was faithful; though severe, impartial; and though unimaginative, true. She could rarely give satisfactory replies to the questions suggested by their innocent curiosity, but at the same time she taught them no evil. Her management was often such as to thwart their favorite schemes, but she never punished them unjustly, or complained of them without reason; and if her dull and uncultivated intellect failed to furnish diversion for theirs, she at least practised upon them no deception, and entertained them with no gossip.

Thus, while their young natures failed to ripen as rapidly as they might have done under other tutelage, and their faculties found little scope for development or growth, they were spared many of the evil influences which had early corrupted the mind of the less fortunate Louise; and if their young souls were checked in their infant expansion, they at least were not poisoned in the bud.

Before Harry had reached his ninth year his impatient spirit burst the bounds of nursery restraint, and obtaining from his indulgent father permission to attend school, he was sent from home to form boyish connections and friendships, leaving his little sister deprived of her cherished playmate, her only companion in thraldom.

Then followed a dreary season, long remembered by poor Mabel, when, during many tedious months, she kept on with her lonesome plays, having no variety in her monotonous life, save a daily walk with her nurse, a short visit from her often ab-

stracted father, or a summons to the parlor, from which she was sure to be banished on occasion of the slightest childish offence.

And then came the release! Alas, that a mother's death should have imparted new life to her child! But so it was, though none but angel eyes perhaps traced out the workings of that infinite love which recalled the unfaithful, earthly parent, that a heavenly father's hand might furnish a better guardianship for his child. The well-dressed groups who assembled to pay the last honors to her who had once been the ornament of their circle, and who bestowed upon her awe-struck and sable-clad daughter the epithets "Poor Mabel!"—"Poor little motherless one!"—this short-sighted group would have started, perhaps, at the lesson and shrunk from the warning, had the voice of truth whispered in their ears that the holiest trust committed to the parent is sometimes recalled, in mercy to the child.

Mabel was eight years old when her mother died, and being the only one of the children who was under the paternal roof at the time, she became the more immediate object of her widowed father's thoughts. Louise had recently been sent to a fashionable boarding-school; Harry still continued at his academy; but Mabel must be provided for. Both the calls of business and his own choice combined to render Mr. Vaughan desirous of leaving the country and closing his house for an indefinite period; but in this case some arrangement must be made which would furnish a suitable home for his little girl.

As she sat on his knee one evening, about a week after his wife's death, and his thoughts, sobered by that solemn event, and concentrated more ardently than was their wont upon his children's future welfare, were especially bent upon the promotion of Mabel's happiness and improvement, there darted into his mind one of those Heaven-directed ideas, whose happy and far-reaching results seem to prove the divinity of their source.

He had, within the past month, received a letter informing him of the death of an old friend, one who had been a playmate of his boyhood, and for whom he had ever continued to

feel a warm and consistent regard. This regard had recently been attested by the loan of a sum of money, trifling in the eyes of the wealthy merchant, but of infinite importance to his friend, who, with an increasing family and pursuing a poorly-paid literary career, had become sadly embarrassed for the want of this small amount.

He died, however, before an opportunity had ever arrived for defraying the debt, and Mr. Vaughan's recent letter from his widow was written less with the view of informing him of her loss, than to acquaint him with her inability to meet his just demands, and to request his indulgence for the present. This was readily accorded, and with a sigh of regret for his friend, Mr. Vaughan dismissed the subject from his mind.

Now, however, as he gazed in the face of his little daughter, reflected upon the disappointment he could not but feel in Louise, and resolved that a wholly different course should be pursued with Mabel's education, he conceived a sudden desire to place her under the sole charge of Mrs. Herbert,—the widow of his friend,—confide to her the trust of which he felt conscious he was scarcely more worthy than his wife had been, and delegate to her the entire authority which had thus far been neglected and abused.

Mrs. Herbert was poor; she had three children to support by her own exertions, and was eager and anxious to employ herself profitably. The proposal, therefore, which Mr. Vaughan made without delay, accompanying it with the most generous pecuniary offers, was as promptly accepted; and thus it happened that Mabel became, as we have seen, one of Mrs. Herbert's household.

We may not pause to trace the benefits which resulted from this event to the widow and her family. The child's coming, indeed, was the signal and forerunner of many blessings; it roused Mrs. Herbert to hope and to exertion; it laid the foundation for what became in time a well-established and prosperous school; and long after, when she had acquired independence for herself, and beheld with joy the prosperity of her children, she failed not to look back to Mabel's entrance into her house-

hold as the date of all her after success. Often are mercies thus combined, and far-reaching are the schemes of Providence; but it is with their influence upon Mabel alone that we now have anything to do.

She remained ten years under Mrs. Herbert's care, often passing her vacations in that home which was to her the happiest she had ever known, and never, during this long period, revisiting her native city, save on the occasion of her sister's marriage with a wealthy banker, which took place when Mabel was still a mere child. Mr. Vaughan's house was at that time leased to strangers, and the wedding ceremonies were held under the hospitable roof of a Mrs. Vannecker, a distant relative of the late Mrs. Vaughan, who had been proud to usher Louise into society, and now boasted that she had made the match.

Here the family were assembled to participate in the preparations and festivities attendant upon the event, all of which were entered into with eager zest by Mabel, and remembered by her afterwards rather as a brilliant dream than an actual reality.

With this exception she never left her school, save for a yearly visit to her grandmother, whose residence was within a day's journey from Mrs. Herbert's; and these visits were of longer or shorter continuance, according to the old lady's state of health, or the convenience of Mabel's aunt, Miss Sabiah Vaughan, who continued to live with her mother, and had charge of the housekeeping. From these absences, however, which from one cause or another were usually of limited duration, she invariably returned with joy to her kind teacher and beloved playmates, by whom she was sure to have been sadly missed, and was always warmly welcomed back, for Mabel was the life of the household.

And here, amid healthful influences, and under the judicious training of one of the best of women, she rapidly developed those powers and capacities which had in her early childhood found little scope for their expansion.

Mrs. Herbert was a religious woman, and she spared no

pains to impart to Mabel the knowledge and love of virtue. She had sound judgment and a highly cultivated intellect, and patiently sought to guide and strengthen the mind of her pupil, and store it with lasting treasures. She was possessed, too, of those social qualities which give a charm to home and render a fireside comfortable and happy; and the youthful group around her were encouraged by her example to the cultivation of every endearing and feminine grace.

Nor was she less a practical than an accomplished woman. She understood every branch of house keeping, every art in needle-work, and had acquired, through years of rigid practice, economy, prudence and skill, in all of which branches her pupils reaped, in a greater or less degree, the benefit of her experience.

Thus, during ten years passed in a plain but well-ordered New England homestead, where the highest mental discipline was combined with instruction in the simplest female duties, Mabel acquired strength of principle, soundness of knowledge, cheerfulness of disposition, and useful and industrious habits. Meantime, her physical development had kept pace with her mental and moral growth; pure air, healthful exercise, and wholesome diet, strengthening and hardening her frame, while with every succeeding year she grew in beauty and grace, until Mrs. Herbert gazed at length with inward pride and delight upon the fair blossom that her own hand had reared, and which had ripened beneath her very eye.

When Mabel, at eight years of age, was first placed under Mrs. Herbert's charge, she was a shy, unformed child, rude in her manners and speech, and wholly unused to any kind of application. At eighteen she was not only beautiful in person, cultivated in mind, and amiable and affectionate in disposition, but to her rich personal and mental gifts she added a winning frankness and cordiality of manner, which, springing as they did from a warm and sincere heart, combined with her other attractions to render her the favorite as well as the pride of her companions.

But Mrs. Herbert was not infallible, nor Mabel faultless.

True, the former had labored diligently for the improvement of one who, next to her own children, was the principal object of her endeavors and prayers, and had met undoubtedly with a proportionate degree of success. But there were faults in Mabel's character which time and diligence had not yet uprooted; faults of whose full extent Mrs. Herbert was scarcely aware, and which were fostered by circumstances beyond her control. Mabel's very popularity among her schoolmates exposed her to danger; and amid the varying characters with which she came in familiar contact, she could not wholly escape pernicious influences, especially during the latter years of her school life, when the number of Mrs. Herbert's pupils had greatly increased.

These faults, however, were not vital. They were such only as are common to most girls of her age, and we need not pause to dwell upon them, for in due season they will present themselves to notice as we follow her in her after career.

Conscious as Mrs. Herbert was of a faithful discharge of duty, and well rewarded as her efforts had for the most part been, she had too much good sense, too much knowledge of the waywardness of the human heart, to believe for a moment that Mabel was henceforth secure from temptation, or proof against its assaults. And, therefore, as she read the few hasty lines from Mr. Vaughan, which summoned his daughter to the superintendence of his house, and the enjoyment of city gayeties, she trembled at the thought that thenceforward Mabel must mark out her own path, unsustained by the guiding hand and almost maternal love which had thus far fostered and protected her.

It needed, indeed, no prophetic eye to foresee the peculiar exposures and dangers which awaited Mabel's future. Already had Mrs. Herbert observed the pride with which the fond father, in his occasional visits, gazed upon his daughter's daily increasing charms, and already had she more than once been compelled to remonstrate against the lavish and profuse indulgence with which he proposed to gratify her girlish whims. She knew, too, the gay and thoughtless circles in which Mrs. Vaughan had moved, in which Louise now shone trium-

phant, and in which Mabel would be sure to be admired, flattered, and caressed.

And because she knew all this, and because she rightly conjectured that in this new sphere no pains would be spared to gratify Mabel's vanity, encourage her ambition, foster her pride, and administer to her self-love, did she tremble for her purity of heart and disinterestedness of purpose.

She feared that in time of trial, when pleasure stood on one side and duty opposed to it on the other, Mabel's unaided strength would fail in the bitter contest. She feared lest selfishness, worldliness, and pride, would triumph at last over the barriers of christian truth and virtue, which she had sought to rear in the young girl's heart. And so, since henceforward she could protect her only with her prayers, she gave her for a watchword and a shield that simple precept, so gentle in its workings, yet so mighty in its power,— that potent spell which disarms every spirit of evil, and is woman's surest weapon, both of warfare and defence, — for she sent her forth to the conflict with the armor of christian love.

And Mrs. Herbert and Mabel never met again. Not that either was speedily called from a career of earthly usefulness; but their paths henceforth lay apart. Often would Mabel gladly have turned to this well-tried confidant and friend for counsel, sympathy, and advice. But it might not be. Other interests soon became bound up in her own, interests in which Mrs. Herbert might not share; and only partially, and at long intervals, could she, even by letter, impart to this friend of her childhood and youth the secret cares and anxieties which burdened her woman's heart.

But there was a spiritual bond between them still, a bond which strengthened with time, and was tempered in adversity, for in her last warning charge, her last earnest lesson, Mrs. Herbert had imparted to Mabel the great truth that woman needs to learn. It slumbered awhile, then awoke in power; at first as a still, small voice, and anon as a flaming sword, it led her on to victory.

CHAPTER III.

> Buoyant, cheerful, happy, bright, —
> I see thee with a quiet grace,
> "Make sunlight in a shady place."
>
> W. Story.

Mabel's emotions on bidding farewell to the home of her girlhood were of a mingled character, pain alternating with pleasure, according as memory dwelt upon past joys, or anticipation pictured forth a brilliant future. Had she foreseen the length of time that would elapse ere she would again set foot in a spot endeared to her by a thousand associations, and had imagination hinted to her the changes which that time would effect, both in herself and in those she left behind, the fond whisperings of hope would have been silenced, and sorrow and regret would alone have filled her heart. But she had a happy, buoyant nature, and in planning schemes for many a summer excursion which should restore her to the old homestead, and many a winter vacation which should bring Mrs. Herbert and her children to share the hospitalities of her father's roof, she forgot the possibility of the separation's being otherwise than temporary.

The moment of parting was indeed a trying one to her affectionate nature, and long after the intervening hills had shut even the village spire from her sight, her thoughts lingered with the beloved teacher and companions, whom she still seemed to see grouped together on the doorstep, where they had assembled to bid her a sad and tender farewell. But, although her travelling companions gave one day only to a trip which is usually performed in two, it afforded her ample time to rally from her grief, and long before the journey drew to its termi-

nation her busy fancy had taken another direction, and gone forth to rehearse the joys attendant upon her welcome home.

She pictured to herself the reception she should probably meet from her father, whom she had not seen for months. Mabel had but little knowledge of him who stood to her in this tender relation, save from his occasional visits and periodical letters; and the former had often been suspended for years, owing to his absence from the country. He was, therefore, imaged to her mind as the tall, gray-haired gentleman, whom, some dozen times during her school life, she had been hastily summoned to Mrs. Herbert's parlor to see; each of which occasions was associated in her recollection with a holiday, a rich gift, and a drive to the railroad station, some six miles distant, to which she always accompanied him on his departure.

That he was the most indulgent of men she had not a doubt, since she could remember no instance in which he had ever denied her requests, or refused to gratify her whims. Of his liberality, her gold watch, her jewelled rings, her well-stocked wardrobe, and ample allowance, had long since furnished evidence; nor, though he seldom gave expression to his feelings, could she be unconscious of the love and pride with which he watched the development of her intellect and her beauty, and triumphed in every added accomplishment and grace. Her intercourse with him, however, had been wanting in that familiarity which leads to confidence, and, being wholly unacquainted with his habits of life and mode of thought, her spirits always received a slight check, and her freedom a slight restraint, in his presence. His letters had been even less indicative of character than his visits; for, although kind, they were brief and somewhat formal, and, on the whole, he inspired in Mabel more of the respect and gratitude due to a thoughtful guardian, than the trusting love which is wont to subsist between a father and child.

She felt conscious, however, that this restraint was unnatural, and as the time had now come when she was to make her father's house her permanent abode, busy fancy suggested that

the warmth with which he would welcome her to his heart and home would at once break down every barrier of reserve.

Of her sister Louise, now Mrs. Leroy, she had still less knowledge. She had seen her but twice since her marriage, and on each occasion for a few hours only. Once she had received a hasty note, informing her that a party, including the Leroys, were travelling in the vicinity of her school and would dine the following day at a neighboring town, where they begged that she would come and meet them. It was about a year after Louise's marriage, and Mabel, then a child, obtained Mrs. Herbert's consent to the plan, and returned in ecstacies with the whole party, especially her beautiful sister. Nor was this impression weakened when, a few years later, Louise accompanied her father on one of his periodical visits, and came, richly clad, to pass a day at Mrs. Herbert's; a day which served to heighten the young school-girl's enthusiasm with regard to the surpassing charms of her sister, an enthusiasm which was kept alive, inasmuch as it was, to a great degree, shared by all her young companions. She looked forward, therefore, to daily companionship with one so lovely, accomplished and fascinating, as scarcely less an honor than a happiness.

Nor in her visions of a joyous welcome did Mabel fail to give a prominent place to her little nephews, two beautiful boys, whom she had never yet seen; and, naturally warm of heart, extravagantly fond of children, and eminently qualified to excite affection on their part, it was no slight addition to her looked-for happiness that fancy pictured these little ones bounding to embrace an aunt whom they had doubtless already been taught to love.

But, although father, sister, and nephews all figured in the vision which Mabel mentally formed of her future home, not one of them stood in the foreground of her imagination—for memory furnished no link which associated them with the home of her infancy. Bright and joyous as her anticipations were of what these relatives might become to her in the future, there were no sweet, childish recollections connected with them, to awaken the tender thoughts which cling around a parent's

hearth. They were all, in truth, more or less strangers to her, and her conjectures concerning them, however pleasing, were necessarily vague and indistinct.

But there was one member of her family whose very name was suggestive to Mabel's heart of happiness, kindred, and home. There was one whose relation to herself was natural and true; who, from the cradle upwards, had shared her interests, her sorrows, and her joys; who had been the playmate of her infancy and the confidant and companion of her girlhood. Her dutiful affection for her father and her admiring love for her sister were of comparatively recent growth, but memory could recall no time when she had not dearly loved her brother. With him was connected every association of that early age when, shut out from the sympathy of the rest of the household, they were all in all to each other. Her mother's neglect and her sister's indifference were either unnoticed at the time or had long since been forgotten by Mabel; so, too, had the brilliant and richly furnished rooms from which she had often been banished in disgrace; but there still rose, fresh and clear to her recollection, the nursery where she and Harry played, the little hopes which they had mutually shared, and the little disappointments over which they had wept together. Nor were these tender memories all that had hallowed their affection; for, while time, separation, and absence, had built barriers between the other members of the family, Harry and Mabel had been in the habit of yearly intercourse, often passing many weeks in the enjoyment of each other's society. Not only did they usually meet on occasion of the annual visit to old Mrs. Vaughan, but nearly all Harry's school vacations were passed at Mrs. Herbert's, or at a boarding-place in the neighborhood, so that the happy home which Mabel had found with her kind instructress came to be considered scarcely less a home by Harry, who voluntarily went there for the holidays.

A longer separation than usual intervened during two years, which the latter passed at West Point; but this was atoned for by the happiness with which Mabel welcomed the young cadet on occasion of his short leave of absence, and the mingled pride

and delight with which she listened to her schoolmates' whispered encomiums of her soldier-brother.

And when, a few months later, he engaged in a boyish frolic, and was suddenly dismissed from the Military Academy, whose strict rules he had infringed, Mabel readily accepted his apologies, allowed herself to be convinced that he was the most injured of mortals, and loved him all the more for the injustice he had suffered.

Mr. Vaughan then sent him abroad to spend two years at a German University, since which time he had been permitted to make the tour of Europe, a tour which the son had protracted beyond the original intentions of the father, but from which he had now unexpectedly returned.

This long absence from Mabel, however, had only served to unite him more closely to her in interest and in heart. Their correspondence had been constant. It was, moreover, full, free and unrestrained, being not only a faithful communication of facts and events, a familiar interchange of thoughts and ideas, but an affectionate outpouring of mutual love.

There was no corner of the old world which Harry's foot had trod to which Mabel had not in spirit followed him; no city, river, or mountain which was not enshrined in her memory as the spot which had furnished Harry with some gay adventure, some historic musing, or some vision of glory; and there was no partner in his winter studies or summer wanderings who did not henceforth stand high in her regard, because he was her brother's friend.

Thus, from childhood upwards they had been united in each other's love, and every year had but served to strengthen the bonds of mutual dependence and mutual trust. Isolated as both had been from any other strong family tie, the repose, the sympathy, the confiding love which are the most hallowed influences of home had been more fully perfected in their relation to each other, and ready as Mabel was to acknowledge the claims of the rest of her family, her heart assured her, as she drew near her father's house, that it was Harry's presence there which alone entitled it, in her estimation, to the name of home.

The first intimation she had received of her brother's return from his foreign tour, was contained in the recent letter from her father, which had summoned her to meet Harry in New York and preside over the festivities attendant upon the reunion of the long scattered family.

"I cannot arrange matters," wrote he, "so as to join you at any point on your journey; you will be rejoiced, however, to hear that not only Louise, the children and myself will be in New York to welcome you, but your brother Harry is on board the steamer which was yesterday reported at Halifax, and he will arrive here by to-morrow at the latest."

It was a dismal autumn afternoon when Mabel reached the city. She had travelled in company with a party of Mr. Vaughan's friends, of whose proffered attendance he had gladly availed himself, and, unfortunately for her hopes of a cordial greeting, she arrived one day sooner than had been anticipated. A less gay and joyous spirit than hers would perhaps have received a sudden check, at the air of soberness and gloom which the paternal mansion wore on her first entrance, at the utter silence which pervaded the hall and parlors, and the stately formality with which she was received by the grave and elderly footman. At first, indeed, she looked round in some anxiety, lest she had mistaken the house, especially, as the tall, stiff figure of a lady dressed in black was just disappearing, at the head of the staircase, with the air of one who is hastily retreating from the sight of visitors. Mabel knew of no such person in the family, and in order to quiet her doubts turned to the footman, and exclaimed inquiringly, "This is Mr. Vaughan's, my father's?" "Certainly, Miss," replied the man, "but you were not expected until to-morrow."

A pretty waiting-maid now advanced from the end of the hall, to offer her services to her new mistress, and at the same moment, the tall, stiff lady who had been leaning over the bannisters to listen, began slowly and cautiously to descend the stairs. Mabel looked up, and to her astonishment, perceived her aunt, Miss Sabiah Vaughan, the last person in the world whom she had expected to see. Rejoiced, however, at recog-

nising a familiar face, she sprung to meet her, embracing her with more than her usual warm-heartedness, and exclaiming as she did so — "Aunt Sabiah! How glad I am to see you!"

Miss Vaughan partially returned the salutation, although awkwardly, and with evident effort, for she was unaccustomed to such hearty demonstrations of feeling, and putting up her hands, she began nervously to smooth down her collar, which Mabel, in her joy, had slightly disarranged. But although her manner was thus constrained, her face betrayed symptoms of satisfaction which were easily detected by Mabel, who was accustomed to every variation of which her aunt's features were capable. Her nervous agitation, too, Mabel knew to be only the effect of pleasurable excitement, and holding her affectionately by the hand, the young girl accompanied her up stairs, the pretty waiting-maid preceding them, and throwing open the doors of the chamber and dressing-room which Mr. Vaughan intended for his daughter's use.

"But where are all the rest? where is Harry?" inquired Mabel eagerly, when she had drawn her aunt into the room, and with some difficulty persuaded her to be seated.

"Why you were not expected until to-morrow, child," replied Miss Vaughan," and Harry has gone up the river with a party of young fellows, and will not be back until late."

"He is come then? he is safe and well?"

"Yes, indeed; and altered so I hardly knew him."

"Oh, how I long to see him!" exclaimed Mabel; and then followed questions and replies concerning the different members of the family. There was no one at home, however, nor any prospect of an arrival until Mr. Vaughan should return, at six, the usual dinner hour. So, with some difficulty composing her excited feelings, Mabel resolved to occupy the intervening time in making those changes in her dress which the dust and smoke of travelling had rendered necessary, stipulating that her aunt should remain where she was, and gratify her curiosity on many points, concerning which she was far from being satisfied.

She could not conceal her astonishment at finding Miss

Vaughan apparently domesticated in her father's house, no mention having been made of her in his recent letter. It seemed that Miss Sabiah had reached New York, only the previous day, and had spent the entire morning, unpacking her trunks in an upper chamber, which, being in the most retired part of the house, she had chosen for herself in preference to the room which had first been allotted to her. Since the death of the old lady Vaughan, which took place about a year previous, Sabiah had boarded in her native village, and had now come by special invitation from her brother to pass the winter in his family. She appeared deeply hurt on learning Mabel's utter ignorance of the plan, having supposed that it would be communicated to her niece as a fact of some importance. The poor lady had experienced her share of neglect in this world, but was none the less sensitive on that account. She looked discontented, too, and ill at ease, and so far from contributing to the cheerfulness of the house, and giving it a home-like aspect, her presence seemed to reflect a far more sombre shadow upon the room than those which were cast by the now gradually deepening twilight. Mabel's quick eye and ready sympathies, saw and understood her aunt's state of mind at a glance; but, although disappointed herself at her father's and brother's absence, and the chilly nature of her reception, her buoyant nature was far from indulging useless regrets, or dismal forebodings. Her spirits, on the contrary, rose with the necessity of exerting herself to please and cheer one whom she was really delighted to find an inmate of the household, and she hastened to complete her toilet, and divert her aunt's thoughts by a proposition that she should accompany her on a tour through the house, which the young girl was eager to inspect. All was new to Mabel. Mr. Vaughan's residence had recently been subjected to a thorough course of repair and enlargement. Old rooms had been converted into others of far different size and construction, and even the well-remembered nursery, to which Mabel had fancied that instinct would guide her at once, had given place to an octagon apartment, lit from the ceiling, and evidently intended for a picture

cabinet. Miss Sabiah, who was even more unaccustomed than Mabel to the display of luxury and elegance which met them at every turn, and who was overawed and oppressed by the magnificence of her brother's house and furniture, felt a sense of relief as she observed the easy and careless step with which her niece trod the velvet carpets, and the confident and unconcerned air with which, as they passed through different rooms, she threw open the blinds, raised the curtains, and altered the position of light articles of furniture and adornment. Darkness, silence, and gloom, seemed to flee before her, and the shadow upon Miss Sabiah's feelings being proportionately dispelled, she at length gave vent to her sentiments in the sudden exclamation — "Well Mabel, I am glad you have come to make some of these improvements. Everything is beautiful, to be sure, but it has looked very dull to me, and I believe my brother finds it so too, for he lives entirely in the library, below stairs, and he told me yesterday, that he had not sat in the drawing-room since it was furnished. As for Harry, he has scarcely been at home since I came. Your father asked him at breakfast how he liked the house. I was shocked at the answer he made, and yet I could not wonder much."

"What did he say?" questioned Mabel.

"Why, that it seemed to him pretty much like any other old tomb; and your father laughed and said 'Oh, well, when Mabel comes she will manage to brighten it up a little.'"

And Mr. Vaughan prophesied truly. Already had his daughter's fresh young spirit begun to exert its magic influence. Already had the rooms assumed the air of cheerfulness, which youth and taste know so well how to impart. Already had the halls and parlors resounded more than once with her free and joyous peals of laughter. And, stranger still, Miss Sabiah's rigid and indifferent expression had begun to soften into an occasional smile, while her dull eye had caught something of the animation which danced and sparkled in that of her niece. Even the servants, as they heard her merry voice while she passed from room to room, seemed to catch the inspiration of her presence. The neat waiting-maid might be seen tripping

through the chambers with a freer step and a lighter heart, and even the grave footman, as he took the plate from the side-board and spread the table for dinner, found himself humming a tune which he had not heard since he was a boy.

Truly there is no sunshine so refreshing as that which beams from a happy youthful heart.

"Now for your favorite song, aunt Sabiah," exclaimed Mabel, as she threw open the grand piano-forte and seated herself before it. "No one praises my singing as you do," and the young girl commenced playing a simple air which she had found, many years before, in an old music-book at her grandmother's, and often sung, to the accompaniment of a cracked and worn-out instrument, for her aunt's especial benefit. To sing was as natural to Mabel as to laugh, nor was it any wonderful proof of thoughtful love that she should select the song which would be sure to please her listener best. The appeal to Miss Sabiah's feelings, however, was irresistible; and, as a moment before, her niece's playful sallies had called a smile to her sunken cheek, so now, at this simple proof of loving remembrance, a solitary tear started to her eye and was wiped away unseen. What wonder-working power there must have been in the girl, who could thus summon both smiles and tears from out the withered and wasted heart which had long seemed callous to any strong emotion!

Mabel, however, quite unconscious of the effect of her music, had sung but a few lines, when she started from her seat, exclaiming, "I hear my father's voice," and in an instant more she had bounded down the stair-case to meet him. He was not in the hall, but the familiar tones proceeded from the library, the door of which stood open. An eager word of greeting escaped Mabel's lips at the threshold of the room, but her step was suddenly arrested by the presence of a stranger, who stood near the door, while her father, with his back towards her, was engaged in unlocking a secretary at the opposite end of the library. Mr. Vaughan turned, however,at the sound of her voice, and throwing on the table a large roll of papers which he had just taken from the shelf of his cabinet, he came towards

her with an air of surprise, lifting his spectacles from his nose as if to make sure that the glasses were not deceiving him, and exclaiming, as he stretched out a welcoming hand, "Mabel? my daughter? is it possible? Why, where did you come from?"

Mabel answered only by a glad smile; for, before she could proceed to make any explanation of her unlooked-for arrival, she caught the sudden glance of embarrassment which (the first surprise being past) overspread the countenance of her reserved parent, at the consciousness of the stranger's presence. Mabel, too, shared this sensation of awkwardness, for her father did not introduce the individual, who appeared to be a business-agent, as he had by this time unfolded the papers and spread upon the table a number of maps and charts, which he was diligently studying.

"You are busy," said Mabel, in an undertone. "I will go back to my aunt."

Her father hesitated, glanced toward his visitor, but still retained her hand in his.

At the same moment, the stranger, who was handling the charts in a hurried manner, and seemed to be in haste, made an abrupt inquiry as to the extent and value of certain landed property, and as Mr. Vaughan turned to reply, Mabel slipped quietly out of the room.

Miss Sabiah had but just determined to follow her niece down stairs when she met her returning.

"Father is busy now," said Mabel, in explanation, "let us go back and finish the song."

The song was finished, and several others had been successively sung, when Mabel, who had paused between each to listen for the stranger's departure, at length announced that he had gone, and now at her persuasion her aunt accompanied her to the library. She was once more, however, doomed to disappointment, and to the mortification of feeling herself an intruder. The papers were still spread on the table, and on entering, Mabel thought her ears must have deceived her, for Mr. Vaughan was still attentively engaged in examining them, with the aid of another person, whose head was bent down so

as to conceal his face, and whom, at a first glance, Mabel concluded to be the man whom she had heard a few moments before bidding her father good-night.

It proved, however, to be her brother-in-law, Mr. Leroy, who had come in unheard, and who rose on her entrance and greeted her cordially, although with an absent air; so abstracted was he that he did not observe Miss Sabiah, until Mr. Vaughan had twice introduced her as his sister, and even then he failed to notice the icy stiffness with which she returned his forced and indifferent bow. His manner was restless and uneasy, and after a few words of inquiry as to Mabel's health and journey, he was evidently anxious to resume the subject in which he and Mr. Vaughan appeared to be mutually interested.

The latter interfered, however, greatly to the relief of Mabel, who was beginning to look with an almost jealous eye upon these important charts, which seemed so many barriers between herself and her father, so many rival claims to his notice and interest. "Not now, Leroy," said he, in a decided tone, thrusting the papers aside and removing his spectacles. "Mabel has but just come,— I have scarcely seen her. I shall be at leisure to-morrow, and we can then come to a decision; but about those eastern stocks —" and then followed a few hasty words in a low tone, to which Mr. Leroy assented by a quick but earnest nodding of the head, after which he immediately took his hat to depart. Mabel asked after her sister. "I think it probable she is under the hair-dresser's hands," was the reply. "I believe she is going to Mrs. D.'s ball to-night." Mabel expressed a hope that she would come to see her the next day, if not too much fatigued, and Mr. Leroy, having declined an invitation to dinner, took his leave.

Mr. Vaughan gathered up the scattered papers, placed them in the secretary, closed and locked the door, and, as he put the key in his pocket, his face assumed a relieved and satisfied expression, which seemed to say that for the present he had done with business and was free to enjoy the society of his sister and child. He was not naturally a talkative man, and Mabel had

never been in his company without experiencing a consciousness of his inability to maintain an animated conversation. He was one of that large class of individuals whose characters unbend most fully under their own roof, and who never appear to such advantage as in the privacy of their domestic circle. He had also many inquiries to make concerning Mabel's journey, her travelling companions, and the hour of her arrival, and, as he drew a chair to the fire, bestowing upon her at the same time a pleased and affectionate glance, she felt emboldened to address him with something of the ease and familiarity of a privileged child. She also by degrees beguiled her aunt into the conversation which was fast assuming a lively tone, and before long, the little group so suddenly brought together, presented the air of a home-circle engaged in familiar fireside intercourse.

There was no mistaking the proud satisfaction with which Mr. Vaughan presided at his dinner-table that day, realizing at once the comforts, the freedom, and the retirement of home, from which he had so long been debarred, and which his increasing age now rendered more than ever desirable. The quiet dignity and precision which were his striking characteristics could not wholly hide the pleasurable emotions with which he once more felt himself a family man. Beneath the veil of strict courtesy towards Miss Sabiah might be detected no small degree of brotherly kindness, and although his voice dwelt with evident pleasure upon the words "my daughter," his mild eye, as it turned upon Mabel, bespoke a deeper well-spring of fatherly love than any words which his lips knew how to utter.

Nor was the gleam of pleasure any less evident which overspread Miss Sabiah's features when Mabel insisted upon her occupying the seat of honor opposite her father, which the elder lady with an awkward show of humility was disposed to resign, but which Mabel disclaimed the possibility of filling, assuring her aunt that she alone was entitled to preside there. Whatever might have been Mr. Vaughan's preference in the matter he was too well-bred to interfere, and the deference with which Mabel thus yielded to her aunt's superior claims gratified

her sensitive and watchful pride, and was a soothing balm to feelings which had been roughly chafed by her past experience.

Harry's absence was the only drawback to the happiness of the party. "Do not sit up for him Mabel," said Mr. Vaughan, as, dinner concluded, he prepared to leave the house. "Nor for me either," continued he; "I have an appointment at nine o'clock, and shall not be in until late. You must be fatigued with your journey, and you will find enough to do to-morrow. Louise will want to take you on a grand shopping expedition, and Harry, I have no doubt, has his head full of plans."

Once more left to themselves, Mabel and Miss Sabiah returned to the cheerful and well-lit library; and soon the former, taking a low seat near her aunt, begged to hear some account of her solitary journey to town, the particulars of which she had not yet learned.

Miss Sabiah, pleased and gratified at having so ready an audience to several little misadventures of the previous day, proceeded to relate them at length, and found in Mabel an attentive listener.

In less time than Miss Sabiah occupied in narrating her travels we will take a glance at the history of her life.

The life of an old maid! A desert, a blank, an unwritten page to the careless, the thoughtless, the unobservant mind. But to the initiated eye which faithfully scans its past, its present, and its future experience, may it not prove a world of strong affections, conflicting duties, anxious cares, and busy memories, whose only register is hidden in one human heart?

Sabiah Vaughan was the youngest of three children, having besides her brother a sister who was a few years her senior. Their father was a man of good standing in his own town, a respectable country trader, and, during the latter years of his life, president of the village bank. Their mother was a notable housewife, somewhat imperious in her temper and ambitious in her views. This ambition centred principally upon her children's success in life, and was proportionately gratified when her son became a successful merchant, and her eldest daughter married a man of property and went to reside in a neighboring

town. Sabiah was still young and could afford to wait awhile; or, as her mother used occasionally to say to her neighbors, "Now that John is doing so well, and Margaret is settled so much to my mind, I feel quite easy about my family. I am not particular about Sabiah's marrying at all, or, if she does, there is plenty of time yet for her to look about and make as good a match as her sister has done."

But, unfortunately, a barrier had already arisen to Sabiah's ever making what her mother considered a good match. During those years when Mrs. Vaughan's mind had been chiefly occupied with the welfare of her other children, Sabiah's affections had become fixed upon one whose poverty was his only unworthiness. But he was a good scholar, and although his father was a farmer in narrow circumstances, the son aspired to one day studying for the ministry; and in looking forward to becoming a clergyman's wife, Sabiah never dreamed of insulting the dignity of her family. So, when the simple-hearted girl made a confidant of her mother, she was as much astonished as grieved at the torrent of reproach which her communication called forth. She was reminded of her brother's wealth, her sister's high position, and asked if she were willing to bring disgrace upon her father's house by connecting herself with beggars. She was reluctantly compelled to admit that it would be years before her lover and herself could reasonably hope to marry, and was at length commanded by both her parents to break at once an engagement to which they would never give their consent.

Sabiah was a gentle-spirited girl. She had been taught from her childhood to yield strict obedience to parental government. She dared not listen to those secret whisperings which termed it, in this instance, parental tyranny, and after a few months of what was, by the united voice of the family, termed obstinate persistence in folly, she at length reluctantly consented to abide by their decision.

That her heart, however, was not unfaithful, the sorrow of years bore witness.

Her lover left their village soon after his mortifying dismis-

sion, studied for the ministry, and eventually married another. Sabiah remained in her father's house, patiently fulfilling a daughter's duties and struggling with a life-long regret.

Nor did the filial obedience and filial respect which had prompted this greatest of sacrifices, diminish or falter during many years of severe privation and trial. So long as her father lived, her devotion to him was most exemplary; a devotion which was painfully tested during the months of distressing illness which preceded his death, when Sabiah's face grew pale, and her figure wasted with constant care and watching.

His affairs in the meantime suffered some disorder, and at his death the widow and her daughter were quite cut off from their usual means of subsistence, their only property consisting in the house and a few acres of unproductive land. "They will be very well off, however," said the neighbors. "John will settle something upon his mother, and Margaret is rich." And when, in the course of years, Sabiah's health became feeble and her hair turned gray, and the village gossips remarked that her temper was getting sadly soured, they said one to another, "Now what can Sabiah Vaughan have to vex or wear upon her, with such a comfortable home and such a quiet life as she leads? If she had a husband that was hard to please, and children that were sick and fretful, and a great dairy like mine to attend to, I could conceive of her being irritable now and then, and looking old and careworn, but really there is no excuse for her with nothing in the world to trouble her."

Was it nothing, then, that for ten long years Sabiah's monotonous existence had been varied only by the petty and vexatious cares and economies which dependence and a narrow income entail? Was it nothing, that during all that time she had experienced constant trials of spirit in consequence of her mother's arbitrary temper, which, since her husband's death, was deprived of its only check? Was it nothing, that all her dutiful efforts and habitual sacrifices called forth no praise, while for every omission or neglect she was reproved as if she had still been a child? Was it nothing that, while the ostentatious gifts of her wealthy brother and purse-proud sister

called forth grateful acknowledgements quite disproportioned to their value, her life-long services were received with coldness and indifference, and that while the wealth and position of these more favored relatives were a constant theme for the old lady's self-congratulation the prospects of Sabiah were seldom referred to saving for the sake of contrast?

If with simple faith and childish trust the solitary heart could have found repose in Him who suffereth not these things in vain, such outward trials might not have had power to mar her inward peace; but as, while she yielded submission to her earthly parents, she had been debarred from that great solace and sweetener of existence which is found in human love, so, while she made no outward rebellion to the lot apportioned to her by a Heavenly Father, she failed to recognize in it the hand of love divine.

Was it strange, then, that her heart grew cold? Or who can wonder that, with affections chilled, and sympathies blunted, she became at last irritable, distrustful, and reserved? She had drank from a bitter cup, and the gall had penetrated into her heart.

That heart was not wholly callous, however. Its sensibilities were not wholly destroyed. There was one little oasis in the desert, one little spring of life and hope amid the wilderness. It was the only one, but its source lay deep, and its power might be made sufficient to fertilize the whole; for there was one being in the world in whose welfare Sabiah still felt a tender and affectionate interest. And that was Mabel.

Strangely enough, this affection for her brother's child was closely associated with that deep parental respect and reverence which formed so strong a trait in Sabiah's character, and which years of injustice had not power to efface. For it was the fact that the child was named for her grandmother Vaughan, which first gave her a claim to Sabiah's love. It seemed to ally her more closely to their side of the house, and distinguish her from her mother's fashionable connections, for whom Sabiah felt a mingled awe and dislike. Moreover, the circumstances of her childhood and school life kept her entirely aloof from

family ties and prejudices, thus giving to her maiden aunt a tolerable chance to win some share of the little girl's affections.

Nor was this strong predisposition in Mabel's favor in any degree lessened during those periodical visits to her grandmother, to which we have already alluded. She was then thrown wholly upon the care of her aunt, and was in a great degree dependent upon her companionship, especially during those later years in which Harry had ceased to accompany his sister. And Sabiah welcomed the care, which was her only labor of love throughout the year, and rejoiced in the companionship which cheered and enlivened her otherwise dull and monotonous life, while with every succeeding summer her heart became more and more closely linked to the child.

Nor did Mabel fail to appreciate this kindness, and reciprocate this love. It was true she often wearied of her visits, and was impatient to return to her schoolmates, for Mrs. Vaughan's house furnished but little diversion for youth. But Sabiah, nevertheless, had the satisfaction of seeing that she had found a place in the heart of her niece; and this happy conviction was confirmed by the fact, that as Mabel grew into womanhood, she seemed to find not only contentment, but pleasure in her society, and gave still further evidence of her gratitude and affection by many a word, letter, and token of remembrance. How those words sank into Sabiah's heart, how those letters were read and re-read, and with what fondness those gifts were treasured up, Mabel little knew. As little did she guess that a deep love for herself was the one green spot in a withered heart; that it rested with her to let that heart remain a wilderness, or bid it blossom like the rose.

How lightly the responsibility rests upon her now; and yet she is unconsciously fulfilling it in part, while she sits with upturned and attentive face, lending a ready ear to a story of misadventure and alarm, her beautiful and expressive features, as seen in the flickering fire-light, proclaiming her warm-hearted sympathy in the tale.

CHAPTER IV.

> The world before her smiles — its changeful gaze
> She hath not proved as yet; her path seems gay
> With flowers and sunshine, and the voice of praise
> Is still the joyous herald of her way.
>
> MRS. HEMANS.

Two or three hours passed away. Miss Sabiah's recent experience had been fully detailed, more remote reminiscences had in turn been called up and dwelt upon, and now the elder lady began to exhibit manifest signs of weariness. Mabel, although somewhat fatigued, would not allow herself to think of sleep until she had seen Harry; but, compassionating her aunt, whom she suspected of one or two naps already, she proposed that they should ring the bell, inquire if the gas was lit above stairs, and then seek their rooms. She mentally resolved to return to the library and await Harry's arrival, as soon as she had accompanied her aunt to her chamber and ascertained that her wants were all supplied; but she said nothing of this intention, and after receiving Sabiah's assent to the first proposition, she rose to summon a servant. At the same moment the door-bell sounded, and Mabel, who was listening intently for her brother's footsteps, heard a merry peal of laughter, and several lively female voices. In an instant more, a party of ladies, in gay cloaks and full evening toilet, were unceremoniously ushered into the room, to the astonishment of Mabel and the discomfiture of her aunt, whose fit of drowsiness was at once dispelled by this unexpected, and, to her, unwelcome arrival.

Mabel's first glance at their visitors betrayed only surprise and bewilderment, but her face became radiant with pleasure as she recognized Mrs. Leroy, who was foremost in the group,

and who, smiling at the confusion their entrance had occasioned, greeted her young sister with a manner which was at once affectionate and marked by perfect grace. She then turned towards her aunt, who maintained a stiff position in front of the sofa, and touched the tips of her fingers with an easy and careless air, at the same time bestowing on her dress and figure a somewhat contemptuous scrutiny.

Meanwhile, her companions claimed Mabel's attention. The one, a middle-aged lady, dressed in a brocade of butterfly hues, and wearing white ostrich feathers in her hair, waited for no introduction, declaring that forms might be dispensed with in her case, as she loved her already for her dear mother's sake, and for the sake of Louise, who was her most intimate friend. She then presented her daughter, a sylph in tarleton, who pressed Mabel's hand with a warmth which seemed an earnest of the friendship that her mother hoped before long to see existing between them.

Mabel was both pleased and flattered. She believed them to have left the ball-room at an early hour, in order to bestow on her this unceremonious and cordial welcome, and she met their advances with a proportionate degree of animation and interest.

At this moment, while they were still standing near the door-way, the bustle which attended their entrance not having wholly subsided, the bell rang again, and this time Mabel distinctly heard Harry's step in the hall. As the familiar sound of his voice at the same instant met her ear, politeness gave way to sudden and joyful excitement, and breaking from her guests without explanation or apology, she ran hastily out of the room.

They stared at one another in mutual astonishment; but their conjectures concerning her behavior were short lived, for before Louise could follow, to learn the cause of her sister's agitation, Mabel returned, leaning on the arm of her tall and handsome brother, who, unconscious of the presence of visitors, playfully drew her into the strongest light the room afforded, and after scanning her features with evident satisfaction, and

many an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, sealed his approbation with several hearty kisses.

Mrs. Vannecker, the elder of Mrs. Leroy's companions, now betrayed her presence by a loud and boisterous laugh, accompanied by a slight giggle from her daughter, while Louise exclaimed, in a tone which conveyed astonishment, if not reproof, "Well, Harry, you are very demonstrative!"

Harry, nothing disturbed, however, by the presence of witnesses, paid his respects to the ladies with perfect unconcern, still holding his blushing sister by the hand. Mrs. Vannecker commenced some bantering comments upon his brotherly enthusiasm, while Mabel addressed herself to the difficult task of entertaining Miss Victoria. The latter, however, had neither eyes nor ears for any one but Harry, and the conversation soon became general.

If Mabel could have had her choice, she would have preferred a more private opportunity for this long-desired meeting with her brother, but now she thought nothing could be more agreeable than the pleasant little confusion of friendly voices which his coming had only served to increase, — nothing could be more exciting than the discussion of plans which immediately ensued, — nothing more gratifying to her self-love than the fact that all these plans had more or less reference to her enjoyment and advantage.

And happy herself, she did not even notice (naughty girl) that her aunt Sabiah had retreated to a distance from the company, and sat with her back nearly turned towards them, moodily gazing into the fire, and apparently ill at ease; she did not even pause to consider whether Louise might not, like herself, have forgotten to introduce her to the strangers in the party, and thus, as it were, excluded her from the conversation.

Harry, while he expressed many regrets that neither his father nor himself had been at the boat-landing to meet Mabel, seemed greatly satisfied with the result of his afternoon's expedition, declaring that it had been the means of his securing such a pair of horses as could not be matched in the city. "Father gave me unlimited authority to make the pur-

chase," said he, "and I was determined that Mabel's first drive should be with her own horses, and that there should not be a finer pair to be seen in Broadway."

"Her first drive must be on a round of shopping," exclaimed Louise. "I, too, have father's authority for making purchases of equal or even greater importance. If you will postpone your excursion until the next day," continued she, laughing, "I will see that Mabel has a bonnet suitable to the occasion. But Harry are you not going to the ball?"

Before he could reply, Mrs. Vannecker began to expostulate warmly against his remaining at home, and Miss Vannecker added in a persuasive tone — "Oh, I am sure your sister will excuse you — it is to be such a splendid affair, and she has been travelling all day, and must be too much fatigued to enjoy even your society any later."

It was with some difficulty that Mabel could be brought to realize that they were going to the ball at this hour of the night, instead of returning as she had supposed, and as in her ignorance of city times and seasons she had thus betrayed her own more simple habits, this fact furnished a new argument for Miss Vannecker, who now insisted that it would be but common charity on Harry's part to bid Mabel good-night, and follow them to the ball.

Mabel accompanied her sister and her new friends to the hall door, to listen to Louise's plans for the morrow, and receive their gay parting words, and while Harry waited upon them to the carriage, she returned to the library, exclaiming, "O, aunt, isn't my sister beautiful?"

"She looks very well," said Miss Sabiah tartly, "but I wish she wasn't so conscious of it herself. It was ridiculous to see her and that Miss what-do-you-call-her looking at themselves in the glass every two minutes, while they were here;" — and Miss Sabiah rose from her chair with a jerk, which seemed to say — "well! now they're gone, I suppose we can go to bed!"

"How good they were," said Mabel, in a half soliloquy, as she followed her aunt up stairs, to come here and see us for a few minutes, when they were on their way to a ball."

"The very reason they came," responded Miss Sabiah, in the same sharp tone in which she had previously spoken; and a moment after, as if carrying out the same train of thought, she continued, "I hate to see folks make such a display! it don't impose upon me though."

Mabel could not find it in her heart to impute the visit to other than the most disinterested and amiable motives, and remembering now, for the first time, that her aunt had kept aloof, and seemed an alien to their gay circle, the suspicion crossed her mind that a sense of neglect prompted the severity of her remarks.

Anxious to atone for this, she accompanied her to her room, explained the working of the window-shades, and the management of the gas (both of which were mysteries to Sabiah), and proposed several plans to be carried out on the morrow, for the promotion of her comfort and convenience.

Miss Sabiah seemed gratified with these little attentions. The hard expression of her face softened somewhat, and the tone of her voice, as she said good-night, was sufficient evidence that whatever might be the cause of her dissatisfaction, she attached no blame to the conduct of her favorite niece.

As Mabel descended the staircase which led from her aunt's chamber, she observed a bright light streaming from a room adjoining the parlor, the door of which, although locked in the earlier part of the evening, now stood ajar; at the same moment, she heard Harry's voice calling to her from within.

To her surprise, she found him stretched in an indolent attitude upon a sofa, attired in dressing gown and slippers, and evidently with no intention of going to the ball. The interest with which he had listened to Miss Vannecker's entreaties, and the apparent assent which his manner implied, had deceived her as to his real intentions.

"What! go to a ball the first evening of your arrival," exclaimed he, in reply to her looks and words of astonishment, "and that, too, when I have not seen you these four years! You must think I care a great deal for balls, or very little for my sister;" and as he spoke, he drew her affectionately to a

seat beside him. "You are not tired," continued he, "at least you do not look so."

She did not indeed. Not only was her face radiant with pleasure at this proof of her brother's unchanged affection, but every object around her served to summon up such emotions of delighted surprise, as quite put to flight every thought of weariness. The little room, which she had now entered for the first time, seemed to the young school-girl a perfect vision of enchantment. The costly furnished parlors, the well-filled library, the wide stair-cases, and lofty halls, had pleased her by their magnificence, and impressed her with new convictions of her father's wealth. But there was something in this little apartment, which appealed to that higher sense, and that more refined taste which were by no means wanting in Mabel, in spite of her light and thoughtless gaiety. The draperied walls and windows gave to the room that air of seclusion and repose which had been wanting to the rest of the house, while a flower-stand of delicate wire-work was covered with choice plants in full bloom, imparting to the atmosphere the freshness and fragrance of a garden. The pictures were few, but their subjects appealed to Mabel's heart, and she felt, rather than recognized, the power of a master's hand. There was no glare of mirrors, no rich display of gilding to dazzle the eye, but there were vases of classic form, tables exquisitely inlaid, a rich buhl writing desk, a miniature book-case of well chosen books, and a few statuettes, while the silvery light which streamed from an alabaster lamp of curious workmanship, gave to the whole a softened and subdued effect.

Harry watched his sister with evident satisfaction, while she made an eager survey of each beautiful object, her eye kindling with pleasure, and many an expression of enthusiastic delight escaping from her lips. "O, Harry," exclaimed she, at last, "how beautiful your room is!"

"Mine!" replied Harry. "You surely do not think all this lady-like trumpery belongs to me. A seat in the corner of the sofa I mean sometimes to claim, but everything else here is at your own disposal."

This was too much for Mabel's composure. She had left her brother's side to examine more minutely the attractive decorations of the room, but as he proclaimed her the mistress of them all, she hastily stole behind him, where he could not see the fast gathering tears called up by gratified feeling, and bending her head over his shoulder, she strove, by earnest words and caresses, to manifest her appreciation of his kindness, for she rightly conjectured that this little treasure-cabinet contained the gleanings of Harry's foreign tour.

"You are too lavish of your thanks, my dear," said Harry in a lively tone, after Mabel had again and again enlarged upon his generosity, taste, and forethought. "It cost me no self-denial to spend my father's money, of which I always had such a liberal supply, and I assure you, I had very little to do with the selection of these fancy articles, except it be a few of the books. All you have to thank me for, is the fact that the Terpsichore did not arrive here minus the tips of her fingers, and that Apollo was saved a broken nose. It cost me a world of pains to get those things properly packed, and passed through the custom-houses in safety. I would not have done it for anybody but you, May, but since you are pleased, I feel very well paid for the trouble." "Can you speak German?" continued he, rising and walking towards the book-case.

"No," answered Mabel, "but I read it a little."

"You must study it with me," said Harry; "you will soon like it as well as I do; we will read these together," added he, placing his hand upon the works of some of the best German authors, "and I will teach you to enjoy Schiller and Klopstock."

"So you will take me for a pupil!" exclaimed Mabel. "Oh, that will be delightful; and this shall be our school-room."

Harry had taken a richly bound volume from the shelf, and was now glancing at it with the eager and almost fond interest of one who cherishes a keen appreciation of an author; for Harry's intellectual tastes had of late developed rapidly. As he closed the book and replaced it, he said,—

"The only difficulty in the way of your studious plans, is

that Louise and the Vannecker set will have the advantage of me, and engross all your time. Louise is a complete woman of fashion, — just what you will be in a week," added he, playfully.

Mabel eagerly and almost indignantly repelled the suggestion. A woman of fashion she should never be, — not if he meant by that a mere worldling. She should enjoy society, of course, as she supposed Louise did; but that need not interfere with her reading, studying, and faithfully keeping up an extensive correspondence with her school friends.

Harry smiled good-naturedly, but with an incredulous look, and an admiring glance at her beautiful face and figure, — a glance that seemed to say "the world will claim you, whether you will or not."

But there was no replying to a smile, however expressive it might be, and Mabel, not appearing to observe its meaning, turned to the Terpsichore, which stood in a little alcove, and, after expatiating upon the shame it would have been if such an exquisite thing had been injured in its removal, she inquired to whom she was indebted for its selection.

"You tell me that you did not consult your own taste; do you mean that these gems were recommended to you by the artists themselves?"

"No, indeed; but I had the benefit of counsel more reliable than my own, or the artists' either. Dudley was with me in Florence, and in most of the studios I visited abroad. His taste is perfect; more than that, May, he seemed to flatter himself that he thoroughly understood yours. It was really ridiculous, the way in which he insisted upon my bringing that musical genius home; he declared we had seen nothing in all our travels so suited to your refined and youthful taste; and the Iris, too, — nothing would do but I should secure that gossamer belle, at any rate. He confidently assured me that they would be of priceless value, in your eyes. I long to have you see Dudley, Mabel; he is a splendid fellow."

Mabel turned away to examine the picture, and, at the same

time, to hide a blush at what she felt to be no ordinary compliment from a man like Lincoln Dudley.

Although some years her brother's senior, Dudley had been his companion, not only during a few months spent in Paris, when Harry first went abroad, but also, more recently, on a most interesting pedestrian excursion through Switzerland, Germany, and some parts of Italy. Thus, for years, his praises had been familiar to her, through Harry's letters; and, from this source, too, she had become inspired with the greatest respect for his uncommon talents, and a most romantic interest in his somewhat eccentric character. She was well aware that her weekly correspondence with her brother had brought her to Dudley's knowledge, and, in some degree, to his acquaintance; still she felt not a little flattered at his having thus studied her character, and divined her tastes, among which, enthusiasm for art was inherent, though, as yet, but little cultivated.

"When does Mr. Dudley return?" asked she, with apparent carelessness.

"In a few weeks. We should have come together, but he was unexpectedly detained in Paris. You will be unlike most ladies, if you do not admire Dudley; he is, generally speaking, very popular. I wonder what he will think of those horses I bought to-day?"

"Is he a judge of horse-flesh?" asked Mabel, in some surprise.

"No more than he is of everything. I doubt whether he understands a single point about a horse; still he could tell at a glance whether a gentleman's equipage was complete, and I would trust to his judgment in a purchase of any sort."

Here Harry's panegyric of his friend was interrupted by his father's return home. He glanced at his watch, discovered the lateness of the hour, and, blaming himself for keeping Mabel up so late, went away in spite of her assurance that she was not in the least fatigued. A few moments after, Mr. Vaughan, hearing her voice, and seeing a light in the room, looked in to

reprimand her for not being asleep, and bade her a kindly good-night; after which, she was left to her own thoughts.

Exciting thoughts they were; and such as, it may well be imagined, robbed Mabel of sleep during many an hour of that first night spent under her father's roof.

What indulgence, what love, what pride were evinced in the demeanor of each member of her family towards her! What plans had they already formed for her happiness! With what bounty had every want been foreseen, and provided for! Now the thought of her father's affectionate liberality was uppermost in her mind; then came the recollection of her manly brother, his warm-hearted welcome, and the promise of future happy days in his society; and this, in its turn, was dispelled by the vision of her graceful sister, who seemed a fitting type of that select and elegant circle into which Mabel was soon to be introduced, and in which she already foresaw the future triumphs that awaited her.

But there were some things which she did not think of, the very things which Mrs. Herbert had feared she would forget, and had labored to impress upon her memory. She did not think of her kind teacher's last injunction, last warning, and last lesson. She quite forgot the duty which every blessing entails, the obligation which is bound up in every privilege, and while her cup was running over, she forgot to ask whose hand had filled it. Not that her heart was cold, or that generous emotions were lost in selfish satisfaction. The tenderest love shone in her affectionate smile, gratitude sparkled in the quick-starting tear, and the unquestioning trust with which her young heart reposed in each new assurance of affection, proved the depth of her faithful, confiding nature.

But, alas! her love is not for Him who has meted out her lot so graciously; her moist eye is not uplifted in thankfulness to the Source whence all these blessings flow; her ardent trust is not in Him, without whom all confidence is vain. Not yet has Mabel learned the sacredness of her mission; not yet has she realized its duties, or its pangs. For the present it is her business to be happy, and her joy to be beloved.

Well for her, if, when pleasure's altars are shattered, — when self-love awakens from its dream, and life be no longer a pastime, her spirit can bow in meek submission, and the inner temple of the heart be consecrated to the service of Him whose love can impart to a life of toil and trial a foretaste of the joys of Heaven!

CHAPTER V.

So forth she sallied, blithe and gay,
And met dame Fashion by the way;
And many a kind and friendly greeting
Passed on their meeting:
Nor let the fact your wonder move,
Fashion and she are hand and glove.

MRS. BARBAULD.

MRS. LEROY'S home was on the second floor of a fashionable hotel. The cares of housekeeping were so irksome to Louise, and so ill-fulfilled, that her husband at length acceded to her often-repeated entreaty that she might be promoted to the independence and luxury of hotel-life; and she had now been for two successive winters the occupant of an elegant suite of rooms, in close proximity to the apartments of her friend, Mrs. Vannecker, whose example had stimulated the fickle Louise, and encouraged her inherent love of change.

Mr. Leroy, who at first opposed this arrangement, had now become its warmest advocate; for, while his natural indolence had prevented his exercising any efficient check upon his wife's domestic mismanagement, he had been the chief sufferer from the anarchy and confusion which pervaded his establishment; and he found under the present system, if not an increase of actual happiness, a release from many petty annoyances, and a marked lessening of his yearly expenditure. And whatever accustomed comforts his new home failed to supply, were amply compensated for at his club, of which he was a constant frequenter.

Louise found here, as she had elsewhere, continual sources of discontent, and was often restless and dissatisfied; especially did she murmur at the peculiar misfortune and hard-

ship which restricted her in her present mode of life from many social privileges to which she had been accustomed in her own house, and it was, therefore, with proportionate joy that she received the first intimation of her father's intentions and plans.

The reception of guests under his roof would be less onerous and far more agreeable than furnishing entertainments of her own. Mabel, being but a school-girl, must be properly introduced into society, and who could be so capable as herself of superintending the festivities attendant upon her entrance into city life? What, indeed, was to prevent the rooms of her wealthy parent from becoming the scene of all those fashionable and social gatherings, over which Louise felt herself well fitted to preside?

Certainly not any opposition on her father's part, — for Mr. Vaughan, while he dreaded to see Mabel become a mere fine lady, or Harry an idle fop, was, nevertheless, too easy-tempered and yielding to oppose any schemes which would tend to his children's gratification and happiness, and, in matters of expense, it was neither his nature nor habit to place restrictions upon the extravagance of his family, — certainly not any want of energy on the part of Mrs. Leroy, whose capacities were never so thoroughly called out as on an occasion like the present, when she was actuated by the three-fold motive of establishing her young relative in the gay world, promoting her own enjoyment, and strengthening her influence in her father's house.

Nor was she destined to disappointment. It was the universal voice among the leaders of fashion, that nothing could be in better taste than Mr. Vaughan's house and equipage, nothing more successful than the grand reception, held in honor of Mabel and gracefully conducted by Louise, nothing more certain than the fact, that the former would rank as the unrivalled belle of the season, and the latter continue one of its choicest ornaments.

Thus, borne on the tide of happy fortunes, and launched into gay life under the most flattering auspices, our young school-

girl achieved, almost without conscious effort, the position to which nature and circumstances seemed to destine her.

"Let me see!" exclaimed Harry one morning, looking up from a daily journal and glancing mischievously at Mabel, "it is a week to-day since your arrival in this great city,—yes, just a week," added he, "and my prediction fulfilled already!"

"What prediction?" asked Miss Sabiah, lifting her eyes from an intricate piece of knitting work and fixing them somewhat anxiously upon Harry, who, lounging over a late breakfast, was, at the same time, carelessly scanning the morning paper.

"A piece of shrewd foresight on my part, aunt, which informed me, that seven days and seven nights only would be required for the transformation of a chrysalis into a butterfly."

Aunt Sabiah, to whom Harry's vague and ironical replies were often unintelligible, moved no further inquiry, but looked down at her work, with the vexed and injured expression of one who has failed to obtain a satisfactory answer.

Mabel, who better understood the allusion, continued to occupy herself with feeding Harry's great dog, holding high above the head of her huge playfellow the dainty bits she had taken from the table, and obstinately refusing to meet the eye of her brother, which she knew to be fixed upon her.

"Two wedding receptions, and an evening concert, on Tuesday," reckoned Harry, counting with his fingers; "fashionable promenade, opera, and ball, on Wednesday."

"Let me disentangle that worsted for you, aunt," exclaimed Mabel, still feigning inattention, and taking a low seat near Miss Vaughan.

"Three magnificent parties on Thursday," continued Harry, "and the grand ball of the season on Friday! Well done, Mabel! well done! I said one week would make a fine lady of you; what a pity I did n't take a bet on it."

"I deny the charge," said Mabel, warmly, "it is n't true, is it, Tartar?" and she patted the head of the dog; "fine ladies do n't play with great dogs, nor understand the mysteries of knitting work either," and, as she spoke, she drew the needles

from the entangled worsted, unravelled a piece of the work, and began patiently to take up the stitches.

"Ah! but I have the proof," said Harry triumphantly, rising from the table; "here we have it in black and white, and what the newspaper says must be true," and he laid before her the paragraph in question.

It was a description of last night's brilliant ball, and among the noted beauties of the evening, Mabel's name stood first. As she read the flattering description of her own personal and mental charms, an indignant flush overspread her face. "An impertinent paragraph like that proves nothing!" exclaimed she, with spirit.

"It merely affixes a seal to the fact," rejoined Harry, "that our school-girl of a week ago has ripened into the woman of fashion," and he pointed to the heading of the article, "Our Fashionable World."

"Then you meant Mabel," said Miss Sabiah sharply, "when you talked about the chrysalis and the butterfly. A mighty civil speech, I must say. You may think it a compliment to call her a butterfly now, but I've never seen the time yet when she deserved the name of a chrysalis,—an ugly chrysalis. For my part I liked her quite as well last week as this. I expect you will spoil her among you," muttered she in an under tone.

"Why, Aunt Sabiah," said Harry, with animation, and in a voice whose irony was lost upon Miss Sabiah, "you do n't mean so! Do you really pretend to say that you were as fond and as proud of Mabel, when she was fresh from Mrs. Herbert's, as now that she has the dress, the polish, and the homage of a city? She was a very good girl, and one of the family, and of course, we felt a regard for her. But just think what she is now. The belle of the metropolis, the queen of fashion, with dozens of brainless coxcombs at her beck and call, and hundreds of intimate friends, who live upon her smiles! Think what a transformation, what a victory!"

"Do n't be so absurd, Harry," interrupted Mabel, amused herself, but dreading lest her aunt should take her brother in earnest, or worse still, be offended at his playful sarcasms; "we

butterflies, for you are one no less than myself, will fold our wings for awhile· this promises to be my first rainy day in New York, and we will have a charming sociable time at home, to make amends for a week's gaiety."

"A rainy day!" cried Harry, walking to the window, and looking anxiously at the clouds; "no, I hope not, our Jersey excursion is to come off this afternoon, and fine weather is indispensable; but, Mabel, how does it happen that you are disengaged? where is the arch enemy?"

"How should I know what you mean, Harry? What strange titles you do bestow on people!"

"No more than is deserved in this instance. Who is the chief enemy of our domestic peace, the ringleader in all these fashionable plots, despoiling us of your society, and inflicting upon us her own at will? If you can't guess who I mean, my aunt can. She is no more friendly to the Vannecker influence than I am."

"O, Harry," said Mabel, laughing, "how ungrateful, when Mrs. Vannecker and Victoria both admire you so much." Harry shrugged his shoulders. "You are safe for to-day," continued Mabel; Mrs. Vannecker and Louise are going to make visits, at some distance out of town; happily I am off duty. What a pity you are engaged on that excursion party; we might have commenced studying our German!"

"Hear her!" exclaimed Harry, with mock gravity, "the devoted and ardent student, only debarred from indulging her intellectual tastes by the unavoidable absence of her tutor!"

"Indeed, Harry!" replied Mabel, "I assure you I have looked at those books again and again, with longing eyes; but I can't find a moment's time for anything but what Mrs. Vannecker calls the claims of society."

"Oh, hang Mrs. Vannecker!" retorted Harry, warmly.

"And her accomplices too?" questioned Mabel, archly.

"No, spare the innocent," said Harry, yawning; "give our soft-headed Louise the privileges of youth, and a chance under another leader; by the way, what a languishing little piece of nonsense—" then, meeting Mabel's astonished and reproachful

glance, he hesitated, laughed, and interrupted himself with, "Oh, she's our sister, is n't she? mum's the word."

The quick and emphatic nodding of Miss Sabiah's head manifested her approval of Harry's half uttered sentiments, and it was with something like animation that she said, in a partial soliloquy, "So, at last, we are going to have a quiet day!"

"Yes," responded Mabel. "It will be a fine chance for me to read those old letters of Grandma Vaughan's, and to pin up the bows for your new cap. We 'll have luncheon up stairs, aunt, and not come down until dinner time."

Miss Sabiah's face lighted up with unmistakable satisfaction at this proposition, but became proportionably overshadowed with disappointment when, a moment after, the impulsive Mabel exclaimed to her brother, "Harry, I have a great mind—"

"Well," replied he, stepping into the hall and returning with his overcoat on his arm, "we know you have a great mind, what does it suggest?"

"That I should walk down town with you as far as —— Hotel."

Harry lifted his eyebrows expressively, saying, "but I thought my lady Finery had driven six miles out of town."

"I know it," said Mabel, "but I want so much to see the children, and they would be at home this morning."

"Very well," said Harry, "I am going directly by there, and shall be charmed with your company; but it may rain; why not take the carriage?"

"Louise has our carriage."

"Our carriage!" exclaimed he, in a half provoked tone; "there's a plot for you! what has become of her own?"

"One of Mr. Leroy's horses is lame, and he has sent them both into the country for the winter."

Harry whistled expressively, and Mabel, with unfeigned alacrity, declared a preference for walking; she was not at all afraid of the rain—was accustomed to brave all sorts of weather, and did not choose to become a hot-house plant.

"I hope you 'll be paid for your trouble," said Miss Sabiah,

in a tone of characteristic tartness, "It 'll be one while before I put myself in the way of those children again."

"How so, aunt?" questioned Harry, in a tone of lively interest. Harry took a mischievous pleasure in encouraging Sabiah's occasional outbursts of antipathy and pique.

Mabel, who was just leaving the room to prepare for her walk, did not hear her aunt's reply, but on returning, equipped for the excursion, she found Harry convulsed with half suppressed laughter, and was greeted with the exclamation on his part,

"Ah, Mabel, you are prepared for an encounter with wild beasts, I hope; according to good authority you are going to face a monkey and a bear this morning; both are dangerous, but one is open and frequent in his mischievous attacks, while the other sucks his claws and meditates deeper injury; that is a fair state of the case, as proved by melancholy experience;" and again Harry laughed immoderately.

Miss Sabiah's face wore the half-vexed, half-puzzled expression which was invariably called up by Harry's raillery, and Mabel, who was always a little apprehensive when he thus ventured to sharpen his wit on the flat surface of her aunt's obtuseness, hurried him away, playfully remarking, that thus warned she should certainly be on her guard.

Miss Sabiah gathered up her work, and, with the customary cloud on her countenance, was proceeding up stairs to the retirement of her own room, when Mabel paused at the hall door to assure her that she should soon return, and while in Broadway would avail herself of the opportunity to purchase a few yards of ribbon which would be required for the cap she proposed to trim.

Miss Sabiah looked gratified at Mabel's thoughtfulness, and the latter good-naturedly waited, while her aunt counted out from an old-fashioned purse the precise sum required for the purchase, and gave the most minute instructions concerning the quantity and quality of the article, — Harry, meantime, impatiently shaking the door-lock with his hand.

"So you have not seen these wonderful boys yet?" said Harry to Mabel, as they walked down the street.

Mabel recounted several disappointments she had experienced, with regard to seeing her little nephews, and declared herself quite excited with curiosity and interest concerning them.

"They must have made a riotous invasion into Aunt Sabiah's room yesterday," said Harry, again giving way to merriment, as he recalled Miss Vaughan's description of the scene. "She 's down on them this morning. She 's too hard upon that little Murray, though; he 's a splendid fellow — the other, to be sure, has rather a hang-dog look."

Some passing object here diverted Harry's attention, and, amid various subjects of conversation and interest, the youthful couple ceased to speak or even think of their young relatives.

Indeed, Mabel's girlish spirits were so elated by the keen morning air, and the lively sallies of Harry, that in the pleasure of the walk she half forgot its object, and was fairly taken by surprise when she found herself at the entrance of the hotel, and her companion pausing to bid her good-morning. Exercise had imparted a more than wonted glow to her cheeks, and her face wore its most beaming expression, as, standing for a moment with her hand in Harry's, she gayly urged him to return home in season to make one of their family circle in the evening. He readily promised to do so, and as she disappeared within the doorway, the affectionate glance which followed her for an instant, bespoke a marked degree of brotherly tenderness and pride.

"Have you turned astronomer, Vaughan?" asked a well-known voice, close at his side, "you appear to be watching the disappearance of a star of the first magnitude."

"Dudley, my dear fellow!" was Harry's quick and eager exclamation, and in the cordial greeting which followed, the latter paid no heed to his friend's first inquiry. Having satisfied Harry's astonishment with regard to his sudden arrival, Dudley again glanced in the direction in which Mabel had disap-

peared, and asked, with evident interest, "Who is yonder brilliant constellation?"

"A new arrival, almost a stranger in the city," answered Harry, with feigned indifference; "you will soon see her, I have no doubt, moving in her orbit."

"Not I," responded Dudley, carelessly; "I start for Washington this afternoon, and there is no knowing when I shall return."

Harry felt disappointed, for he was really impatient to introduce his friend to Mabel.

"I have half an hour to spare," said Dudley, looking at his watch, "and a hundred things to say to you, Vaughan," and putting his arm within Harry's, he accompanied him down Broadway.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh, when she 's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
She was a vixen when she went to school,
And though she be but little, she is fierce.
SHAKSPEARE.

As Mabel, after parting with Harry, ascended the wide staircase leading in the direction of her sister's rooms, she heard a loud noise, as if some one were striking the floor above with a heavy stick. In a moment more a little figure appeared in sight, riding upon a stout cane. He was galloping, in imitation of the motions of a horse, and at every step the cane rattled upon the floor behind him. At the same time he was shouting to the imaginary steed in a voice which at least bespoke healthy lungs. He was a beautiful child, with long curls of fair hair hanging upon his shoulders, and his dress, though disordered and somewhat slovenly, was gay and fanciful in the extreme. That he was wholly unmanageable was evident from the fact that he paid no attention to the voice of a young, tired-looking girl, who was following and vainly calling upon him to stop. Just as Mabel reached the top of the staircase, the girl overtook the child, and attempted, with a restraining arm, to check him in his course. At this moment, and when the long passage-way was ringing with the sudden and violent cries of the now angry and excited boy, a door opened from a neighboring room and a gentleman exclaimed, in a severe tone, "Really, if you cannot keep that child still, I must complain to the landlord, — my wife is very ill, and that boy has been troubling us all the morning." The poor girl looked in despair, especially as the little horseman had, in the meantime, escaped from her grasp, and was continuing his sport, regardless of the impatient

voice and threatening manner in which the gentleman now called to him, in the words — "Stop, sir!"

In the meantime, Mabel, half-smiling at the scene, kept on her way towards her sister's apartments, which were in an opposite direction, and passing the spacious parlor and bedroom, paused at the door of a chamber beyond, which she knew to be used as a nursery. She knocked slightly, but perceiving at the same moment that the door was ajar, opened it and went in. Directly opposite to her, seated at a high table, and with his feet dangling from his chair, was one of the young gentlemen whom she had come to seek. He could not have been more than eight years of age, but as he sat with his forehead resting on both hands, and his eyes fixed upon a book, there was in his stooping attitude, and the grave, fixed expression of his face, something which it was painful and unnatural to witness in so young a child. There was but little life or animation in his features; his complexion was dark and sallow, and his thin fingers were thrust through his long hair in such a manner that it fell over them in distinct and heavy locks, shadowing and nearly concealing his otherwise high and open brow. He did not move or change his position as Mabel entered, but glancing at her from beneath his hand with a wholly indifferent air, said, abruptly, "Mother's gone out;" and then kept on with his reading.

Before Mabel had time to reply, she was roughly thrust aside by the same little urchin whom she had seen in the entry, and who now rushed by her into the room, still riding on the stick, with which he made the circuit of the apartment two or three times, drawing in his chin, and opening and shutting his mouth, as if in the act of champing a bit. At length, as he drew near the table of the young student, who had not hitherto bestowed on him the least notice, he commenced a series of caracoles, and then, bobbing his head, as if irritated by the pressure of a tight rein, contrived to hit the book, which had been propped in an upright position on the table, and succeeded in throwing it on the floor. His brother, for both were in truth Mrs. Leroy's children, received this bit of pleasantry

with a glow of sullen anger, and stretching forth his foot from beneath the table, bestowed a sudden kick on the unruly author of the mischief. Mabel, still standing near the door, was an attentive witness of the whole proceeding. Alick, the bestower of the reprimand, perfectly aware that he was observed, cast upon her a half-mortified, half-defiant look, which seemed to say, "you saw! I don't care if you did;" and then stooping down, he picked up his book and replaced it in precisely the same position which it had occupied before.

He appeared, meanwhile, quite indifferent to the cries of the younger child, who, although in reality but little hurt by his brother's blow, had thrown himself upon the floor, and was screaming and sobbing with all his might.

Shocked at Alick's rudeness, and repelled by the sullen expression of his face, Mabel's sympathies were now wholly with the younger boy, who, in spite of his wilful and riotous behavior, seemed the more amiable of the two. She took him, therefore, upon her knee, soothed his cries, and, with the view of relieving the astonishment of the children's attendant, who looked at her with surprise, made haste to announce her relationship. As she said, "I am your Aunt Mabel," Alick looked up quickly from his book, gave her an earnest and searching glance, and then looked down as before. Murray, however, the other, appeared careless and unconcerned on this point, but submitted to her caresses, allowed himself to be comforted, and upon being permitted to search her pockets for the confectionary which she informed him was to be found there, quite forgot his past injuries, and became sunshiny and good humored.

Mabel could not win from him, however, any recognition of her claims upon his love. He received her attentions and favors as a part of the homage due to a petted child, but shook his head when she asked him if he did not remember the many kisses Aunt Mabel had sent him in her letters to mamma, and the pretty toys which came in a box at Christmas. Convinced by his manner, that her name awakened no emotion of interest in the boy, and failing to perceive the expression of eager scrutiny with which Alick had for an instant regarded her, she

felt a momentary pang of disappointment, in the thought that the children she had been so impatient to see, looked upon her as a stranger. But her loving nature would not permit her to be easily repulsed, and she resolved that since it rested wholly with herself to awaken the affection of her little nephews, no pains should be wanting on her part. So she exerted herself most sedulously for the entertainment of the younger boy, at the same time endeavoring to excite the attention of his silent brother. During the half hour that Murray sat upon her knee, the increasing interest with which he gazed into the face of his beautiful young relative, and the eagerness with which he listened to her playful and lively words, were sufficient evidence of the success which seldom failed to attend her efforts to engage the ear and win the heart of childhood. She more than once turned from him to address a remark to Alick, but he either gave her no reply or answered in such a sulky tone, that she was at length deterred from any attempt to become better acquainted with him.

In the meantime, there was still another in the room who, although unnoticed herself, watched Mabel with no small degree of admiration and curiosity. This was the young girl who had the charge of the children, and whose weary-looking face had excited Mabel's compassion as she came up the stairs. Her's was indeed a hard task, — a task which under the most favorable circumstances, might have worn upon the strength and spirits of so young a girl, and which was rendered doubly difficult, by reason of her having in Mrs. Leroy's employ several different parties to please, any one of which it was impossible to satisfy. Moreover, she had been delicately brought up, and her present employment was new and irksome to her.

To have the restless Murray quiet and amused for one half hour, to be spared the necessity of furnishing diversion for him, and to be permitted to sit by and listen to the pleasant words and lively sallies which were no less entertaining to herself than to her little charge, was a pleasure the more keenly appreciated because so rarely enjoyed; and Mabel little knew with what a smile of satisfaction she was watched

by another pair of eyes, beside those which beamed brightly upon her from the face of the child. At length a sudden gust of wind, and heavy rain drops pattering against the window, gave Mabel the first intimation that the storm which was threatening when she left home, had now commenced with great severity. Imprisoned as she thus was, in the hotel, and fearful lest her aunt would be anxious at her continued absence, she was revolving in her mind the possibility of sending a messenger to her father's house, when she recognized in the neighboring passage-way the voice of Mrs. Leroy, and the loud laugh of Mrs. Vannecker. At once conjecturing that the storm had hastened their return, she hurried to meet her sister, in hopes that she might be in season to detain the carriage. But she was too late; the coachman had already driven off. Louise gaily reproached her, however, for desiring to run away the moment she had reached home. "To whom, pray, was your visit intended?" asked she.

"To the children," replied Mabel. "I have seen them at last."

"And how do you like them? Is n't my precious Murray a darling little pet? and as for Alick — I hope he was in his usual good humor?"

Her tone was sincere when she spoke of Murray, but she turned to Mrs. Vannecker with a short laugh, as she uttered the latter clause, and both the laugh and the tone of her voice betrayed that the remark was made in irony.

Mabel understood the insinuation and, while she wondered that her sister could speak lightly on so grave a matter as the bad temper of her own child, she said to herself, — "I have seen him then in his usual mood; — what a very disagreeable boy he must be!"

They now bade Mrs. Vannecker good-morning, and Louise led the way to her own apartments, Mabel following her, at the same time requesting that some one might be sent to summon the carriage, as, on her aunt's account, she felt the importance of returning home at once.

But she found it impossible to resist the pressing and grace-

ful manner in which Louise insisted that she should stay, at least until after lunch, assuring her that it was the height of folly to make herself such a slave to the whims and fears of the old lady, who, she plainly saw, was disposed to play the tyrant; and Mabel, too easily yielding to her sister's persuasions, consented to remain. As they entered the drawing-room, Murray came bounding to meet his mother, who took him in her arms, lavished upon him many an endearing and flattering epithet, and throwing herself upon the sofa, in an affected and languishing attitude, permitted the indulged child to trample at will upon her rich dress, and play with the artificial roses that adorned her bonnet.

As Mabel looked at them, she thought she had never seen a more interesting picture of maternal loveliness, and child-like beauty; but the scene thus presented was as short-lived as the effect was striking; for Louise's vanity, both on her own account, and that of her child, being quite satisfied by this little display of tenderness, she could not long restrain the impatience and irritability which rendered such companionship irksome, and after a few moments, the rash and wilful hand of the boy having assailed the delicate lace of her collar, she thrust it hastily aside, and abruptly lifted him from the sofa to the floor. As she did so, he succeeded in snatching a rich ermine mantle from her shoulders, and retreated to the other end of the room, dragging the delicate white fur behind him on the carpet.

Louise, who was expatiating to Mabel upon the attractions of a dramatic performance to take place that evening at the house of one of the leaders of fashion, seemed at first quite unconscious of this feat on the part of the child; but in a moment more she rose suddenly from her seat, and still continuing in an earnest strain of conversation with Mabel, took a few steps towards Murray, who was roughly playing with his prize, and snatching one end of the mantle, which lay stretched upon the carpet, endeavored to wrest it from his grasp. Her manner was resolute, but the boy was nothing daunted. He clung to his new toy, and by a sudden effort, extricating it from his

mother's hands, gathered it in his arms, and escaped to the opposite corner, casting over his shoulder a triumphant glance at his baffled parent. So far from following up the pursuit, however, or uttering a word of reprimand, she appeared rather to glory in the rebellious spirit of the child; her only comment upon the failure of her attempt consisting in a smile of amusement at the success with which he had asserted his independence of control. Nor did the risk of injury to the mantle further engage her thoughts, but, passively yielding to the little conqueror, she resumed her seat, and continued the scarcely interrupted strain of her discourse upon the music, dresses, and decorations of the evening's entertainment.

Mabel, while engaging with animation upon the subject of pleasures which had for her all the zest of novelty, scarcely gave a thought to this little contest between parent and child, save as she considered it a proof of that sweet softness, and amiability of character, which forbade Louise to exercise severity, or exact obedience. As she sat, however, in full view of the child, who was now mounted upon a chair, acting in his favorite capacity of an imaginary horseman, with the long ends of the mantle serving as a bridle, she more than once had her fears excited for the safety both of the boy, and the ermine. A slight start on her part caused Louise, at one time, to turn her head in that direction, but, dreading a stormy altercation with the little rebel, she closed her eyes to the possibility of the mischief that might ensue, and, with a languid smile, permitted him to continue his sport. At length, a sudden jerk on Murray's part, and the mantle, which towards the end was narrow and slender, became rent, and gave way, precipitating the child to the floor, the fragment of the torn fur still grasped tightly in his hand.

Mabel sprung to his assistance, for, although his fall was not heavy, or from a great height, he uttered a succession of piercing shrieks, and she feared he might be seriously hurt. Louise started at the same moment, but Mabel had lifted the boy to his feet before his mother reached the spot. The eager question of the former, "are you hurt, darling?" was scarcely an-

swered, and he still continued sobbing, when Louise caught sight of the torn fur, which she angrily snatched from his hand. Alas! now, for that softness of manner of which many beside Mabel had often experienced the charm! It vanished in an instant. The subdued voice of Louise was changed to loud tones of reproach; words of sudden anger took the place of her usual languid accents, and the little hand, so perfect in contour, so graceful in gesture, now gave added force to her words, as she inflicted with it a sudden blow upon Murray's offending palm. But the refractory urchin was no unresisting victim of her displeasure; he boldly maintained his defence, and Mabel became the witness of a violent and noisy struggle, which ended in Mrs. Leroy's forcibly expelling the child from the room, amid a succession of kicks, screams, and threats, which would, probably, have alarmed the household, had not such outbursts been a matter of almost daily occurrence. Grieved and shocked at the scene, Mabel expected to see her sister still more painfully affected by so unnatural a conflict. But, on the contrary, Louise turned to her with a smile, and on observing her half-embarrassed, half-distressed expression, laughed outright.

"I am afraid he is hurt," suggested Mabel, "he cried so loud when he first fell."

"Oh, no," answered Louise, in a careless tone, "he always cries so;" and she proceeded to the examination of her mantle, fitting the piece in her hand into the place from which it was torn, and saying "what a shame! I wonder if I can get it mended at Lefarge's?"

So intent was she in considering the best mode of repairing the damage, that for several minutes she took no notice of Mabel, who gradually recovered from her surprise at the contradictions in her sister's temper, especially as she found that this little outbreak of maternal indignation exercised no lasting check upon the merriment of the child, whom she soon heard in the neighboring nursery, engaged in happy play.

Two or three hours had elapsed, the season of lunch was long passed, and Mabel's conscience beginning once more to re-

proach her for this continued stay, she had persuaded Louise to send for a carriage. It had not yet arrived, and she was somewhat impatiently awaiting it, when a loud cry was raised in the nursery, and a moment after, Murray came screaming into the room, evidently in some new distress, and, quite forgetful of past difficulties, running to his mother for sympathy. She opened her arms to receive him, begged to know what was the matter with her sweet pet, and with many tender and exaggerated expressions of solicitude, promised that whoever had harmed him should be punished.

Alick had harmed him, had pushed and kicked him, and both he and Lydia had called him ugly names.

"I called him no ugly names," exclaimed the tired-looking young nurse, appearing at the door, her face, at first pale, becoming quite red as she observed the presence of Mabel.

"Be quiet!" said Mrs. Leroy, in an imperative voice to the girl; and going to the open door of the nursery, she demanded of Alick, in a severe tone, what new injury he had been doing his brother, adding, in the same breath, "I know you are always rude to him."

"He 's rude to me," was the boy's surly reply.

His mother, unsparing of words and threats, continued to reprove him, but he made no further apology, receiving her rebukes with indifference, not to say inattention, and deigning no answers to her inquiries into his behavior. He found an advocate, however, in Lydia, who commenced at once, "Alick was not to blame, Mrs. Leroy,—"

"You need not tell me that, Lydia," replied her mistress, "I know who is always to blame in these quarrels."

"He called me names," muttered Murray, "he did. He said I was a beggar!"

"I did n't!" retorted Alick, speaking bluntly, and between his teeth.

"No, ma'am," exclaimed Lydia, earnestly. "I was telling them what a good little sister I had at home; Alick said he should like to see her, ma'am, and I promised to take him there, if you had no objections. It was Murray himself who

spoke of beggars. I 'm sure Rosy is no beggar, and if my mother is n't rich, she is very respectable."

"I said I did n't want to go and see any beggar girls, and no I do n't!" said Murray, "and then Alick said I was n't any better than a beggar myself. I am, aint I, mother?"

"Certainly, my dear. Alick you are a bad boy to talk so to your brother, — and, Lydia, don't let me hear any more of this. Of course, you are not to take either of the boys to any low places. The children you are used to may be good children, and they may not, but, at all events, they are not fit company for my children."

"Indeed, Mrs. Leroy," exclaimed Lydia, her face becoming suffused with the deepest crimson, her eye flashing angrily, but the trembling of her lip, at the same time, giving evidence of an emotion deeper than wounded pride, — "indeed, ma'am, I only wish you could see such children as I am used to; there's some among 'em that might teach a lesson even to a lady."

If there was incivility in this remark from a young girl to her mistress, it was almost lost sight of by Mabel, who was struck by the deep earnestness and feeling with which it was spoken. Not so with Louise. She viewed the girl's words merely as an outbreak of impertinence, and passed judgment upon them accordingly. It would have been well for her dignity, if she could have so far commanded her temper as to speak Lydia's dismissal with calmness. But this was not the case. In the violent and abusive language with which she assailed her for forgetfulness of place, and neglect of the respect due to her superiors, she more than forfeited her own position as a lady, nor could Mabel feel otherwise than shocked at the harshness with which she assured the poor girl that she had forfeited her month's wages, at the same time forbidding her to leave her service until a new nurse was provided.

It was some consolation to perceive that these fits of temper were as transient as they were severe. As Louise closed the nursery door upon Lydia, she seemed to exhaust her displeasure in the words, "there, I have done with her; — now I shall have the trouble of finding another nurse for those

children, — little plagues;" and the next moment she addressed some light remark to Mabel on the subject of her dress for the approaching evening, — adding, "I will go this minute and borrow Mrs. Vannecker's ear-rings, to try if coral is becoming to me!"

CHAPTER VII.

Not every flower that blossoms
Diffuses sweets around;
Not every scene hope gilds with light
Will fair be found.

Mrs. S. J. Hale.

Engrossed with this new scheme for the indulgence of her vanity, Louise hastened at once to her friend's apartment, and lingered there so long, that before her return the carriage came for Mabel, who could not find her scarf, and supposing that she must have left it in the nursery was compelled to go there and seek it. As she opened the door unheard, and stood unperceived in the room, a sight met her eyes which excited both her sympathy and her interest. Poor Lydia, overcome with grief, had thrown herself upon the narrow bed usually occupied by one of the children, and so vehement were the sobs she uttered, that they shook her whole frame convulsively. Her eyes were fixed and vacant, and there was an hysterical gasping in her throat, which frightened Mabel, lest the girl might be choking with an emotion which she evidently could not control. Alick was standing beside her, — his face no longer apathetic and indifferent, but expressive both of sorrow and indignation. He seemed to be making an endeavor to soothe her, and as Mabel entered the room she heard him say, "I should n't care for her, Lydia, — she 's a cross old thing." At first Murray was no where to be seen; but on taking a nearer view, Mabel perceived the little fellow, who, really affectionate in his disposition and truly grieved at his own share in causing Lydia's distress, had crept upon the bed, and was nestled close beside her, with one arm round her neck. At the sound of Mabel's voice speaking kindly to her, Lydia gave a sudden start, and the presence of a stranger seeming

to act as a powerful motive for self-control, she succeeded in somewhat mastering her agitation. Mabel took a glass of water from the table and sprinkled a little of it on her face, as she had seen Mrs. Herbert do on a similar occasion. The shock acted as a restorative, and after a few more gasps the excited girl found relief in natural and fast flowing tears.

Mabel, although a stranger to such emergencies, spoke a few words of comfort to her, which drew forth in return an expression of poor Lydia's overcharged feelings. "Indeed, miss," she sobbed forth, "I meant no harm, but I felt so bad at what she said about the children, you would n't wonder if you knew —" here her words were lost in tears, but she soon recovered herself and added, — "So now I've lost my place, and I don't know what I shall do."

"I'll ask mother to keep you," said Murray, in a soothing tone.

Lydia smiled upon the wayward child, but said nothing. Alick, in the meantime, stood a little in the background, gazing in the face of Mabel, who looked concerned for the girl, but uncertain what part to take in the matter herself. As, after a few moment's pause, she turned to leave the room, she was arrested by Alick, who exclaimed, as if in further explanation of Lydia's conduct, "She can't get her money now, and its too bad; she wanted it for her mother and Rosy. Mother said she would n't pay her, and she won't, she 's just so ugly."

Mabel's countenance evinced how much she was shocked by the boy's unfilial language, but he did not perceive this; his eyes were following the hand with which she now sought her purse. Poor Lydia, in the meantime, was the picture of mortification and distress. Words of bitter disappointment on her part had betrayed to the observing Alick the secret of her family's necessity, but despite her dependent situation, she had a sensitive pride which shrank from Mabel's becoming a partner to this knowledge.

Mabel, scarcely less disconcerted, for she was a novice in

such circumstances, inquired the amount due her for the services which were now at an end.

"Six dollars," said Lydia, in a faltering voice, "but, O miss, it's no matter."

The sum was in her hand before she had finished speaking. "Never mind," said Mabel, soothingly, and putting aside the hand which offered to return the money, "keep it, — do, — and I will arrange the matter with Mrs. Leroy some other time."

Then, anxious to escape the half-audible thanks of Lydia, she hastily left the room, followed by the wondering, admiring gaze of Alick. Murray manifesting his satisfaction in an equally characteristic manner, by attempting to turn a somerset on the bed.

A quick blush of surprise and embarrassment overspread her face, as, on re-entering the drawing-room, she discovered Louise standing near the half-open door of the nursery, where she must have plainly overheard all that had passed within. She was trying the effect of the coral ear-rings at an opposite mirror, and did not even turn her head, on Mabel's sudden entrance. Had the latter been detected in a mean, instead of a generous action, she could scarcely have been more disconcerted than she now felt, at the consciousness of having played what her sister might consider an officious and censorious part in a matter with which she had no immediate concern. There was an awkward silence between them, interrupted at length by Louise, who, after impatiently jerking one of the ear-rings, and finally entangling it in her hair, exclaimed in an imperious and ruffled tone of voice, "Do, Mabel, see what is the matter with this, — I can't do anything with it!"

Mabel hastened to extricate and clasp the refractory ornament, and then stood by the side of the irritable little beauty, who, after surveying herself for a moment with no slight degree of satisfaction, exclaimed, "How pretty they are! I wish they were mine! If I had money to throw away," continued she in a meaning tone, "as some folks have, I would buy me a pair this very day!"

"Yes, they are quite pretty and becoming," said Mabel, with

an absent air. She understood her sister's allusion, and fearing she had given deep offence, was meditating an excuse for her own presumption on the score of poor Lydia's necessities.

"I hope," added Louise, tartly, and with a short, contemptuous laugh, "that you do not mean to charge me with all that wastefulness you have been guilty of in the next room; your purse must be longer than mine if you can afford to pay people for putting on airs and getting up scenes."

Mabel, astonished at her sister's meanness and indifference to distress, was at a loss for a reply to this unexpected outburst; but Louise, having thus given vent to her vexation, and at the same time disowned a debt which she never intended to discharge, seemed to be immediately restored to good humor, and dismissing the subject with the same ease with which a child forgets its little annoyance at the sight of a new toy, she entered with flippant and eager gaiety upon the subject of the evening's entertainment.

Mabel could not so easily free herself from the agitation and embarrassment to which her sister's words and her own awkward situation had given rise; but, relieved to find the affair amicably settled, although at the expense both of her purse and her feelings, she lent a ready ear to all the theatrical details which Mrs. Leroy had gleaned from Mrs. Vannecker, and from Victoria, who was to take part in the performance. It would be a charming occasion, but it was on Mabel's account, chiefly, that Mrs. Leroy professed to congratulate herself at the opportunity; it would be something so new to her, and so interesting. Harry, too, would be delighted to escort them.

Mabel hesitated. She was strongly tempted by her sister's glowing description of the exciting scene they should witness, the lovely little theatre, its decorations, etc.; but at the mention of Harry's name, she remembered the understanding between herself and her brother, that they were to have a quiet evening at home. She mentioned this circumstance to Louise as a motive for relinquishing the project, and once more the good-humored smile vanished from the face of the latter, who,

resuming, as it were, her previous right to be angry with Mabel, turned coldly away, saying in an offended tone, "Very well, — I shall stay at home then, of course; I have no wish to go alone."

Mabel's countenance betrayed signs of indecision at sight of Louise's disappointment and displeasure. She had already given offence once this morning; she could not bear to be thought censorious or disobliging; but what would Harry think of the proposal?

Reflections of this and a similar nature were interrupted by a fretful expostulation from Louise, who, comprehending her chief cause of hesitation, exclaimed, "It is nonsense to think of staying at home on Harry's account, for I will venture to say, he is full of the idea himself before this time. Several of his friends are among the *dramatis personæ;* he will hear of the performance in the course of the day, and be quite enthusiastic on the subject.

This last suggestion had the effect of overruling Mabel's scruples, and just as she was on the point of departure she yielded a reluctant promise to send the carriage to the hotel, and be herself in readiness at an appointed hour, for which obliging concession she was rewarded by a radiant smile, and affectionate pressure of the hand, from the conciliated and satisfied Louise.

But though Louise was satisfied, the case was far otherwise with Mabel; and the shadow which, during the homeward drive, clouded her usually happy features, had its rise in many contending, contradictory, but alike painful emotions.

A young girl of eighteen, of a happy temperament, impulsive character, and warm affections, is not likely to prove a strict or severe judge of those faults and foibles which are concealed or atoned for by a pleasing and fascinating exterior; but Mabel, with all the romance, sensibility, and ardent imagination of girlhood, had a deep and steady love of justice, an unsophisticated sense of right, and an honest contempt for meanness and duplicity. She could not be blind or indifferent to those unexpected traits in her sister's character, which the events of the

morning had brought to light, and in proportion as fancy had hitherto invested Louise with mental and moral loveliness, did she shrink from the reality disclosed on a nearer view. The emotions awakened in Mabel's mind, however, were somewhat indistinct and undefined, and she did not even attempt to analyze them. She felt, but did not reason, and the rambling nature of her reflections resulted only in a general sense of dissatisfaction and disappointment.

The succession of vague doubts, regrets, and apprehensions, which chased each other through her mind, was suddenly put to flight as the carriage stopped at her father's door, and a more immediate and pressing cause of anxiety forced itself upon her recollection. "What will Aunt Sabiah say to my long absence?" was her mental inquiry as she entered the house. The hall clock struck four as she passed up the staircase. "So late," was her inward exclamation; "is it possible?" And then came the still more startling remembrance, that she had returned without the promised bit of ribbon. Truly, thought she, this is one of the days when everything goes wrong.

Everything had certainly gone wrong thus far. Miss Sabiah had passed a lonely, cheerless day, and was proportionately depressed. With martyr-like spirit she had declined taking luncheon, a meal of no slight importance to one of her country habits, and it was with difficulty that she could be persuaded that it was not yet too late for a biscuit and a cup of chocolate, which Mabel brought with her own hands from the dining room; she declared that Mabel's forgetfulness to purchase the ribbon was of no consequence, — O, no, — not the least: what consequence could it be whether she wore a new cap or an old one?

From this hopeless state of despondency it would have been in vain for any one but Mabel to attempt to arouse her; but in the partial eyes of the aunt the favorite niece was never the chief delinquent; and after inveighing at intervals against Louise's growing influence over her sister, and declaring herself quite resigned to the loss of Mabel's future society, Miss

Sabiah allowed herself to be cheered and comforted by listening to the contents of a bundle of old letters, which Mabel read aloud until dark, manifesting a degree of girlish interest in the musty heap of ancestral details which truly warmed the heart of her maiden aunt.

Both then and afterwards, Mabel carefully avoided all reference to her visit at the hotel, unwilling to excite her aunt's prejudices by relating the stormy occurrences of the morning, and Miss Sabiah, on her part, scorned to make any inquiries concerning Louise and her mode of life, subjects on which she professed perfect indifference.

But the perplexities and annoyances of this unfortunate day were not yet at an end. At dinner, Mabel waited in vain in the hope that Harry, who had returned home from his excursion-party fatigued, but in high spirits, would broach the subject of the theatricals; he remained provokingly silent on the subject, however, and when, after dinner, he called for his slippers and proposed going for his flute to accompany her on the piano, she was reluctantly compelled to confess the promise she had made to Louise, explaining at the same time her own reluctance to accede to the proposal, until over-persuaded by her sister's confident assurance that he would be delighted to accompany them.

She hardly knew whether to be hurt or amused at the raillery which her communication called forth. "And so you really believed that humbuggery!" exclaimed Harry. "Here have I been, these last two days, employing all the arts of a blackleg to keep clear of those jackanapes, who were trying to entice me into that nonsensical farce. Why, I have hardly dared show myself in any of their haunts, and have been half afraid of my own shadow lest it should take the form of a stage manager; and you, innocent lamb that you are, would lead me into the very thick of the fight. Why, they would condemn me, without mercy, to the part of Julius Cæsar, or worse still, that of Vic Vannecker's lover; upon my word, my dear, they are a perfect set of harpies."

Miss Sabiah now began to expostulate against Mabel's life

being sacrificed to late hours and bad weather, and Mr. Vaughan taking alarm at these intimations, looked up from his newspaper to remark, that it was a very wet evening, and that he hoped she did not think of going out.

The discussion, however, was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Leroy, whose wilful obstinacy was proof against all opposition. Mabel would now gladly have retracted her promise, but Louise exacted its fulfilment, and the most that could be peaceably effected was a compromise, by which it was agreed that they should return home early. At Mabel's earnest entreaty, seconded by that of her father, Harry was persuaded to accompany them, with the express understanding that he was at liberty to make his escape, if there was any attempt made to enlist him for future service among the theatrical corps. At the carriage door, however, they were greeted by the voices of Mrs. Vannecker and her daughter, who were comfortably ensconced on the back seat.

A low exclamation of impatience escaped from Harry. "I 'm off," whispered he to Mabel; then added aloud, "there are enough of you to take care of each other, I see—good night."

If Mabel felt vexed at this inauspicious commencement of the evening, this feeling was scarcely allayed by the events that succeeded. The much vaunted performance proved to be merely a rehearsal; the parts were ill-learned, the stage ill-lighted, the actors out of humor. Louise betook herself behind the scenes and mingled in the petty contentions of the rival aspirants; while Mrs. Vannecker wearied Mabel's ears with an excited recital of Victoria's wrongs, and her successful retaliation upon the offenders. Long before Miss Vannecker and Louise could be persuaded to depart, which was not until near midnight, Mabel had, despite her good-nature, arrived at the uneasy conclusion that her sister and friends were making her the tool of their own love of pleasure, and ceasing to feel any interest in the histrionic disputes and failures, her thoughts became occupied with compassion for her aunt and Harry, who were awaiting her at home, and sympathy for her

weary coachman and restless horses, exposed to a wintry rain, and, like herself, the victims of imposition.

But the vexations of the evening did not end here. A more provoking disappointment was yet to come.

It was half-revealed in the triumphant expression of countenance which met her on her return home, and Mabel felt a deeper sense of regret than she would have been willing to acknowledge, when she learned that during nearly the whole of her absence, Harry and Miss Sabiah had been in the enjoyment of Lincoln Dudley's society, listening to his rich strains of anecdote, poetry, and learning, borne, as her imagination suggested, into those regions of thought and fancy to which such a mind as his could not fail to lead the way. She even fancied there was something malicious in the relish with which Harry quoted some of his friend's best sayings, — something positively taunting in the assurance of her usually unimpressible aunt, that she would not probably have any opportunity during the winter to make the acquaintance of this uncommonly agreeable man, for that he had missed the cars by accident that afternoon, had devoted his only evening to them, and would leave for Philadelphia in the Sunday morning train.

So ended a day of vexations; and Mabel's weekly calendar of pleasure, excitement, and gratified pride, closed with a confused but certain sense of weariness, regret, and disappointment.

How impossible it is to please everybody, thought she, as in the retirement of her own room, she mentally reviewed the events of the day, dwelling with peculiar bitterness upon that climax of misfortunes, — the loss of Dudley's visit.

And having thus come to the conclusion that it was impossible to please everybody, she composed herself to sleep with the half-formed resolve, that henceforth she would attempt only to please herself.

Happily, neither this dangerous resolve, nor the painful emotions which had given it birth, were destined to survive a night's repose, and the Sabbath sun shone on no more radiant

face than Mabel's, and enkindled in no youthful breast more generous impulses.

A deeper cloud may one day settle on her pathway, and involve her bright spirit in a deeper conflict. Well for her then, if the powers of darkness flee away at the dawn of light, while faith whispers to her burdened heart that earth has no night of trouble and despair from which the Sun of Righteousness may not at length arise with healing in his wings.

CHAPTER VIII.

How wondrous are God's secret ways!
The chastening furnace of affliction
Taught this young maiden's heart to praise
Her Lord in streams of benediction!
Sorrow, and poverty, and pain,
Might hide from sight the blessing streaming
From Heaven on her fair head; but plain
Unto the eye of faith 'twas gleaming.
E. L. NIGHT WATCHES.

LEAVING Mabel to the soothing influence of youthful slumber, let us follow one of equal years, but of far different fortunes, who, at a somewhat earlier hour in the evening, might be seen, alone, unprotected, and on foot, hastening down a neighboring street.

The duties of the day fulfilled, the children sunk in sleep, and her mistress' evening toilette completed, the weary Lydia sought Mrs. Vannecker's apartments, and having persuaded that lady's good-natured maid to take her place in Mrs. Leroy's nursery, threw on a well-worn bonnet and shawl, and promising to return in an hour, passed down a back stair-case and left the hotel at a quick pace.

The night was dark, and the walking bad, being in some places wet, and in others slippery with the half-congealed rain. Lydia was thinly shod, and had not walked many rods before her feet were thoroughly soaked, and her whole frame shivering with the cold. She felt timid, too, at being alone in the streets at so late an hour, and as she ventured into the narrower and darker lanes of the city, cast more and more anxious glances around her. Once, in her haste, she slipped, and would have fallen, but a rude, though kindly hand, was suddenly stretched forth for her safety, and before she could see

whence came the friendly aid which had abruptly restored her to her feet, her beggarly-looking benefactor had passed on. Still more alarmed at the attention which this little circumstance attracted, and disturbed at the quick, and as the over-excited girl imagined, the curious glances bestowed upon her by one or two passers-by, she now commenced running, and had proceeded some paces without looking to the right or left, when, as she gained a street corner, a hand was suddenly laid upon her shoulder. She gave a quick and nervous start, but, re-assured by the sound of a familiar laugh, checked herself in her rapid progress, and exclaimed, quite out of breath, but in a tone of evident relief, "Why Jack, is that you? How you frightened me?"

"What are you afraid of?" asked the other, in a rough, but boyish tone.

"Afraid of everything," said Lydia. "I am not used to being out in the night, and you ought not to be either; who is that with you?" added she, in an undertone, as she caught sight of a figure lingering near them.

Jack hesitated, and then replied, somewhat reluctantly, "Bob Martin."

"Oh, Jack!" was the only response the girl made, but the tone of her voice conveyed reproof.

Her brother, for such was the relation between the two, looked down, marked a little circle on the snow with his foot, and was silent.

"Come," said Lydia, "I am going home, and I am in a hurry. I have only an hour to stay. Come with me, Jack."

The boy made a reluctant movement to accompany her, at the same time whistling significantly to his companion, a youth much taller than himself, and who, with an independent and swaggering air, had sauntered down the street in the direction the brother and sister were pursuing.

"Hush!" whispered Lydia; "don't call that boy,—I don't want him."

"Well, come along, then," said Jack, roughly, and he moved in the direction of home. They had not proceeded far, how-

ever, before they overtook Bob Martin, who was purposely loitering under the shadow of a building, and as they passed him, Jack spoke, under his breath, but loud enough to be distinctly heard by Lydia, "You wait here, Bob,—I'll be back in a jiffy."

The two walked on for a few moment in silence, then Lydia exclaimed, with considerable irritation of manner, "I wonder what mother would say, Jack, if she knew you were out with Bob Martin at this time of night!"

"Mother does n't know anything about him," replied the boy, "nor you either. Bob 's a real good fellow!"

"Why Jack," cried Lydia, "how can you say so? You know he is the most idle, profane boy in the neighborhood; I should think you had had warning enough to keep out of his way."

"I do n't care," said Jack, "he is a real good-hearted fellow, anyhow."

"I should think you would be ashamed of yourself, Jack," said Lydia, vehemently, "to be standing up for such a fellow as he is!"

"Did n't he stand up for me, I should like to know?" retorted Jack, angrily.

A glance of scorn shot from Lydia's eyes, as she replied in a contemptuous tone of voice, "Well, if I were in your place, I would n't say much about that."

"Why not?" asked Jack, turning almost fiercely upon her.

"Because," answered she, with temper, "if you like to talk about it, I do n't."

"Poh!" exclaimed Jack, attempting a braggart tone, in spite of the evident mortification which overspread his face at his sister's words.

A long silence ensued, broken only by an occasional whistle from the boy, who walked at Lydia's side with a shuffling gait and a forced air of unconcern. At length, the latter asked, with some abruptness, "How is Rosy?"

The question seemed to have a magical effect upon the boy. He ceased whistling, and the careless, blustering tone in which

he had previously spoken, became subdued and tremulous as he replied, "She aint any better; I do n't believe, Lyddy, she ever will be."

Lydia did not answer, and they reached their destination without another word being spoken. Jack, having accompanied her to the door, now drew back, as if he had no thought of entering, and she, seeing the movement, paused and looked in his face with eager scrutiny, while she said, "You do n't mean to go back to him to-night?"

"But I do, though," was the defiant reply.

Lydia expostulated with injudicious warmth, and a short and somewhat sharp dialogue between the two, resulted finally in the irritation of both parties, and a resolve in the mind of the self-willed boy to enjoy the society of his friend whenever he pleased, in spite of his sister's well-meant but unavailing interference.

The truth of the case was this. The Hope family, of which Lydia and Jack were members, had, a few weeks before, been subjected to agitation and alarm by the sudden tidings that the latter, with a party of rude companions, had been engaged in a street brawl, and was shut up in the watch-house for the night, with the prospect of being next day committed to jail. From this situation he had only been rescued upon the payment of a heavy fine, which consumed the hard-earned savings of his mother, and compelled his hitherto indulged sister to seek the service she now fulfilled at Mrs. Leroy's.

The poor widow, already nearly weighed down by misfortune, bowed her head in silence at this new stroke, uttered few complaints, greeted her son on his return home with few reproaches, save those which were conveyed in every line of her despairing countenance, and pursued her daily labor with a slow step and apathetic air, which spoke of a weary, care-worn frame, and a heart grown old and seared amid anxiety and trouble.

But Lydia had not yet reached that degree of hopeless submission, nor had she learned in the school of hardship and disappointment that meek forbearance which has its source in

Christian faith. Moreover, her spirit could not easily brook the mortification and distress which Jack's misconduct had entailed upon them all, and she assumed more than an elder sister's privilege in the harsh rebukes which she bestowed upon the offender, and the bitter scorn which she heaped upon his idle and profligate companions, especially Bob Martin, a recent and most unprofitable associate.

Jack could not deny the fact that Bob had led him into difficulty, but he still insisted, with grateful warmth, on the debt he owed him for the ability and shrewdness with which he had conducted their mutual defence, obtaining their liberation after a single night's imprisonment at the police station.

To every accusation brought against his new friend by the incensed Lydia, he was ready, as we have seen, with the prompt rejoinder, "He 's a good-hearted fellow, any way, and stood up for me when all the rest were only thinking how they should get clear of the scrape themselves."

Thus, this mortifying adventure served, on the whole, to confirm rather than weaken the influence which the experienced offender had gained over his young and unsophisticated companion, who, long since emancipated from his mother's control, and still less disposed to submit to Lydia's dictation, now appeared to acknowledge no authority save that of the city magistrates, of which his recent experience still held him in awe.

But, although blind to the silent woe painted on his mother's features, deaf to the unsparing rebukes of the injured Lydia, and steeled against the ill-opinion of the neighborhood, there was one gentle influence against which the boy's rebellious spirit was not proof. There was one eye which followed him, even when absent from its presence, — one voice which never spoke to his ear unheard, — one little hand whose restraining pressure had power to check him in his headlong career. Gently and noiselessly had the spell been cast around him ; but the boy's rude nature softened, and his heart bowed down with something like holy awe, when he listened to the sweet, loving words, or gazed upon the little withered form of his invalid sister, Rosy.

She alone had received him after his disgrace, in that spirit which at once whispers to the contrite heart of sorrow, forgiveness, love, and hope. She had extended her little trembling hand, and while the tear started to her large blue eye, had pressed it to her fevered cheek, and murmured, in broken accents, "you will not stay away from Rosy another night?" and he had laid his head on her pillow and wept, though no one but Rosy knew it.

There was a chord in his heart, the secret spring of which this sick little sufferer alone had power to touch. Often, amid noisy and contentious scenes, did this one tender and plaintive note break in upon the discord; and thus it happened that, on the evening in question, when Lydia, in the tumult of excited feeling, was about to lay an impetuous hand upon the latch of her mother's door, she was checked by a sudden and hasty caution from Jack, who, immediately after a storm of angry invective, exclaimed, in a more gentle tone, "Hush! Lyd,— don't make a noise,—like enough Rosy's asleep,—she was when I came away."

This door, the upper part of which consisted of glass, and thus answered the purpose also of a window, led directly into a low, dimly lighted, and ill-furnished shop; and notwithstanding Lydia's precautions, a little bell attached to the entrance tinkled loudly as she entered. She paused a moment, until the sound should have died away, and was then advancing into an inner room, when she was met by her mother, whose quick ear had caught the ever-welcome sound of the bell, and who was eagerly hastening to wait upon the supposed customer.

"Why, Lyddy, is that you?" she exclaimed, her sober face relieved by a sickly smile, as the parent prevailed over the shop-keeper, and her disappointed hopes of a purchaser for her goods gave place to maternal satisfaction at the sight of her child.

Then, bestowing on her a more careful glance, she added, in an anxious tone, the smile at the same time dying away from her pale face, "What is the matter, child? How wet you are! here, come into the back room—I've got a fire in the stove;"

and she stepped into a small apartment behind the shop, Lydia following her with a languid step and quivering lip. It was a mere box of a place, uncarpeted, scantily furnished, and with a close, unwholesome atmosphere. The flames which were crackling in the stove had evidently been but recently kindled, for the mixture contained in a large kettle, placed directly over them, had not commenced boiling, and the air in the room was chilly. Lydia threw her bonnet on a table, seated herself in a chair beside it, and fixed her eyes moodily in the direction of the stove. Her mother stirred the mixture. Neither of them spoke. At length a long sigh from Lydia broke the silence. "Do tell me what has happened," said Mrs. Hope; "something has gone wrong, and I may as well know first as last;" and as she spoke she stretched out her hand and gently closed the door which led into a little sleeping-room beyond. Then, as Lydia still continued silent, she added, "have you left your place?"

"Not yet," exclaimed Lydia, the self-control which had been but ill-maintained before, now giving way entirely, and her voice half-choked with sobs; "nothing so dreadful is the matter, and I wish I had n't come here to-night; I don't see what I did for,—only—only—" and here she covered her face with her hands, and fell to weeping so bitterly that she found it impossible to utter another word.

The poor mother looked distressed, and continued her operations at the stove with a vacant air, her eye resting on her child. A somewhat commonplace and practical character, and constant familiarity with trouble, forbade any more marked demonstration of anxiety. Her sympathy was none the less keen, however, and from time to time she uttered interjectional phrases, designed to call forth an explanation of this new sorrow, and subdue its effects.

Not until the girl had indulged in a short but hearty fit of weeping, did she pay any regard to the "Come, Lyddy!—now don't Lyddy!" with which her mother from time to time addressed her. At length, however, she lifted up her head, shook it with a determined air, wiped the tears from her stained face,

and drawing near the stove, took off her shoes and placed her wet feet upon the hearth. Encouraged by these favorable symptoms, Mrs. Hope seated herself in an opposite chair, and soon had the satisfaction of hearing from the now loosened and voluble tongue of Lydia an explanation of her agitated state of mind. Greatly relieved was she, also, to become assured that this unusual agitation had sprung from causes far less serious than her imagination had pictured.

Still the poor woman could not listen unmoved to a detailed account of the injustice and abuse which her child had suffered, nor could she fail to share the suspicion and dread which had been excited in Lydia's mind by Jack's recent display of obstinacy and self-will, a full report of which was unhesitatingly poured into her ear.

Had Lydia been a heroine, had she even been a girl of spirit, she would not have fled to her mother with this long list of troubles. She would either have staid away from the abode of poverty and sickness, or would have come hither with a cheerful countenance. She would have drawn a veil over her own grievances, and pondered deeply upon Jack's disposition for bad company, before she had saddened her mother's heart, and perhaps caused her a sleepless night, by expatiating upon his violence and folly.

But Lydia was no heroine; she was only a tired, irritated servant girl, whose fortunes and spirits were both under a cloud; and so she came — as hundreds of us have done in our turn — to pour all her grievances into a mother's ear, and lay her weight of sorrows on a heart already sufficiently burdened with its own.

"Well," said Mrs. Hope, with a deep groan, "if you can't stay at your place you must come home — that's all. We can't be much worse off than we have been; and as to Jack, why — if he will go to ruin, he will, and its no use to worry about it."

Such philosophy was not very consoling; still Lydia's load of care seemed lighter, now that her mother had taken up the burden; and recalling the one bright feature in her day's expe-

rience, she proceeded to relate the incident of Mabel's interference, at the same time drawing from her pocket the price of her painful services, advanced to her from such an unexpected quarter. But, greatly to her surprise and grief, her mother refused to receive the money. "You will find plenty of use for it yourself, before you get another place," said the poor widow, who inwardly shrunk from appropriating the wages of Lydia's daily slavery. "You have n't a decent pair of shoes to your feet," added she, glancing at the worn and almost useless slippers now drying on the stove.

"Oh, take it, mother, do take it!" exclaimed the mortified and repentant Lydia, at once perceiving the effect of her own selfish murmurings.

"Hark!" said Mrs. Hope, softly, without seeming to notice her extended hand. They both listened. A low sound was distinctly audible through the closed door of the bed-room. Mrs. Hope made a motion to rise, and at the same instant the shop-bell was heard to ring. Lydia started forward, saying, eagerly, "I will see if Rosy wants anything, mother, while you mind the shop."

Let us follow Lydia into the bed-room. There is a taper dimly burning there, an indulgence always craved by the sick child, who propped up by pillows is reclining on the bed. It would be difficult to guess her age; for though her little wasted limbs and tiny hands would seem those of a young child, there is no youthful glow in the pale and sunken face resting on the pillow. Her hair is light, and has a golden tinge; her transparent forehead is marked with deep blue veins; there is a dark circle beneath her eyes; her features are narrow and contracted; her thin lips pressed close together as if sealed in that position by long and persevering efforts to repress every indication of the pain which has, nevertheless, set its seal on each line of her expressive face. There is no beauty, no loveliness, no childish promise in that pinched and narrow countenance, on which disease has stamped itself for years. Only in the deep blue eyes, which like brilliant jewels seem starting from their withered settings can one read aught

of hope; nor is it any earthly hope with which the soul seems ever looking forth from those bright windows, on — on through the mists of time, to some happy, though unknown land, where the patient little sufferer may hope to rest.

Lydia opened the door so noiselessly, that the sound was unheard by her sister, who had awaked from sleep with the moan which had been heard in the next room, but who now commenced singing, if that could be termed singing which consisted merely of a low, warbling sound, — a few soft syllables, chanted again and again, — to a tune of her own composing. Her eyes were fixed on the opposite wall, and she did not observe Lydia's entrance, until the latter stood close beside her. She then turned her head slightly, unclasped her thin hands and laid one of them on the hand of her sister, saying softly, "Lyddy!"

Lydia sat down on the side of the bed. Who would have believed, to see the pretty, well-grown young woman, and the puny, sickly child, that there was a difference of but five years in their ages! but so it was, for Rosy's little withered form had already numbered thirteen summers.

"Have you been very sick to-day, Rose?" asked Lydia in a low voice.

"O Lyddy," said the child "I've had to sing all the time when I have been awake."

Lydia sighed, for Rose had told her in confidence, just before she left home, that she never sang except when in great pain.

"O, poor Rosy!" she exclaimed, in a tone of deep compassion.

"No, not poor," said Rose, thoughtfully, "not poor;" and fixing her eyes upon the opposite wall with that earnest gaze which seemed to look far off into the future, she added — "little pilgrim and I have kept each other company all day, — the path is dark, Lyddy, but God's blessed angels keep watch above the clouds, and the way grows brighter at the end, you know."

As Rosy spoke, Lydia's eyes unconsciously sought the

object to which the child's attention seemed riveted, as if striving to discern in it the source of that rapt and serene joy, which now lent a momentary glow to her sister's sunken features. The feeble light of the taper shone directly upon a small, but exquisite engraving, which, neatly and even richly framed, was strangely incongruous with the meagre furniture and time-stained walls of the apartment, being the only object of taste or luxury which the room afforded. A portion of the picture was in shadow, but the figure of a youthful traveller was discernible in the foreground, above whose head rolled many a dark and threatening cloud, while the path beneath his feet was obscure and narrow. He trod with an assured step, however, and an eye uplifted to the spot where, in the clearer firmament, three cherub heads might be distinctly seen, looking forth from above the silvery summits of those very clouds, which at their base were so dark and fearful.

It was no new appeal which this little fellow pilgrim made to the sympathizing heart of Rosy,—no fresh lesson of encouragement and hope which she drew from the sight of the angel-guard, set above life's dreary pathway. For many a year, the picture had accompanied her from one room to another, hanging always opposite her bed, during the long weeks of illness that had often confined her to her pillow. But its eloquence was not exhausted yet. Every day, on the contrary, her spirit drank deeper of its heavenly lesson, and became more and more convinced of the reality of its blessed promises; while to her lonely hours of pain, it acted as a soothing balm, none the less effectual from the frequency of its application.

A moment's glance at the familiar picture was sufficient for Lydia, whose mind was not open to the language of art, more especially to those things which are spiritually discerned. None could be blind to its sacred truths, however, as they were seen reflected in the holy patience, the religious calm, which overspread the pale face of Rosy; and a deep and humble sense of contrition stole into the heart of Lydia, as she compared her own fretful murmurings with the saint-like submission of the child. "O Rose!" cried she, her self-reproach

bursting forth with a sudden vehemence which startled the invalid girl, — "you make me quite ashamed of myself — indeed you do! I wish I were half as good as you are. My troubles are nothing to yours, and yet I make myself and everybody else miserable; while you, — you make the best of everything?"

Rose looked anxiously into her sister's face, and answered soothingly — "O, Lyddy! no wonder you get discouraged, you have so much to do, and so many to please, while I only have to be patient with myself. I have thought about you all the week, and have wished — Oh, how I have wished, — I could see you once in a while, and know how you were getting along, and whether the boys were very naughty, and if you had to sit up late every night for Mrs. Leroy. You are all tired out, aint you Lyddy?" continued she, observing the languid, and despairing attitude into which the weary girl had thrown herself. "Here, lie down by me a few minutes and rest!" Rose threw her arm over her sister, and as the latter laid down beside her, she went on in a soft and soothing voice, — "tell me all about them, Lyddy dear."

"What shall I tell?" asked Lydia.

"Oh, everything, whatever troubles you most?"

But that Lydia could not do. The petty vexations of the week, had sunk into insignificance in view of Rose's patient endurance, nor could she relate to the sick child the deeper wound she had suffered on her account, with all its unhappy consequences.

"I will tell you," said she, after a moment's hesitation, "of some one I have seen to-day, who is as beautiful as —

"As Mrs. Leroy?" inquired Rose, interrupting her.

"Oh, yes indeed," answered Lydia, in a tone which seemed to disdain the comparison.

"But you thought her so pretty at first!"

"Did I? Well, I don't now; but never mind. Miss Mabel does n't look one bit like her, though she is her sister;" and warming with the subject, Lydia lifted her head from the pillow, and leaning on her elbow with her eyes fixed upon Rosy,

entered upon a glowing panegyric of her new and kind young friend.

Rose seemed to catch her enthusiasm as she proceeded, and at length exclaimed with eager interest, as Lydia paused in her animated description, "Tell me more; what did she say to Alick? did he like her?"

Lydia, once embarked on the subject, gave a faithful narrative of Mabel's visit, with the exception of those particulars which related to her own difficulty with Mrs. Leroy and consequent dismission.

"Fresh, bright and beautiful! and just from the country!" said Rose meditatively, — "Oh, how I should like to see her!"

Lydia sighed as she thought how improbable it was that this wish would ever be gratified.

"You will see her again?" said Rose in an inquiring tone.

"Perhaps so."

"And you will remember everything she says, and does, so as to tell me?"

"I will try."

"Just from the country!" again soliloquized Rose. "How I should like to see some one from the country." Poor Rose had never in her life been beyond the city streets, and the country, to her imagination, was an earthly Paradise.

"Rose," said Lydia, in a hopeful tone of voice, "you must get better, so that next summer you and I can go up to the old farm."

Rose shook her head, and then as if a thought had suddenly occurred to her mind, said in a quiet whisper, "Lyddy, where's Jack?"

"Gone off with Bob Martin," replied Lydia, some returning bitterness mingling with her tone of voice," and I may as well go back alone," continued she, making a movement to rise from her place by Rose's side, "for like enough he won't be home till morning."

"Yes he will," said Rose confidently; "he will come to give me my drops at ten; he has never forgotten it since you went away. Is it near that time now?"

"It can't be far from it," said Lydia. "I will go and get my bonnet and see if my shoes are dry."

At this moment Jack's voice was heard in the shop, and just as a church clock near by struck the hour of ten, he entered Rose's room on tiptoe, holding in his hand a cup and phial. Lydia had not yet left the room, but sat behind the bed, quite out of sight, and Bob Martin himself could scarcely have been more astonished than she was at the sight which now met her eyes.

Could this be Jack, the noisy and oftentimes profane boy, who now stood near the light, carefully measuring out and counting the drops? Could it be his rough hand which was tenderly passed beneath his sister's neck, while he gently rested her head on his shoulder, and placed the medicine to her lips? Above all, could it be his rude accents which were now softened to the affectionate inquiry, "Do you feel any better, Rosy?"

Yes, it was Jack; there could be no doubt of that, for as Lydia followed him into the kitchen, after his labors as a nurse were completed, he betrayed his ordinary self by the abrupt and harsh manner in which he addressd her with, "Well, Lyd! you here yet?"

"Of course I am," said Lydia, half provoked, half grieved, at his surly manner towards her; "did you snppose I had gone back alone?"

"Jack!" called Rose from the next room.

He was instantly by her side.

"You 'll go home with Lyddy?"

"Yes."

"And then come back to me?"

"Yes."

"That 's a good boy."

"Good night, Rose," said Lydia, stooping over her bed to kiss her, while Jack went to look for his cap. "I can't tell when I shall see you again; give this to mother when I am gone. Good night, darling;" and she left in Rose's hands the bank-bills which her poor mother had declined receiving.

It was a very dreary walk back to the hotel — still raining, and very wet under foot. Jack and Lydia proceeded rapidly and in silence, the former somewhat in advance, while the latter tried to pick her way so as to avoid the puddles in the side-walk. Both were thoughtful; both perhaps a little mortified at their recent ill humor; at all events, neither felt disposed for conversation, and a hasty good-night from Lydia, and a sulky response from her brother were all that passed between them.

Perhaps the walk, with the meditations to which it gave rise, left an impression upon Lydia's mind, for her sleep that night was haunted by the vision of a dark and dreary road on which she and Jack were travelling; sometimes Mabel seemed to be with them, leading her little nephews by the hand; and always the path was hard, and the sky overshadowed with clouds. But they went on, it seemed to her, in safety, and the way grew brighter as they went, while on every cloud an angel rode triumphant, and every angel wore the face of Rosy.

CHAPTER IX.

> And oft though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
> At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
> Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
> Where no ill seems.
>
> MILTON.

SEVERAL weeks passed away, during which Mabel continued to enjoy an almost uninterrupted round of gaiety. A city belle, however, should, notwithstanding the precautions of modern luxury, be possessed of a constitution insensible to every injurious influence; and Mabel, despite her usual high health, was not proof against the combined effects of excitement, exposure, and fatigue. A sudden cold, accompanied by feverish symptoms, compelled her, at length, to forego all society, save that which her home afforded; and now for the first time, perhaps, did she learn to estimate the full extent of that solicitude of which she was the cherished object. Her father's affectionate anxiety, her aunt's assiduous and patient nursing, and Harry's brotherly attention and devotedness, far outweighed the gratification derived from the numerous bouquets and notes of condolence which covered her dressing-room table; and during a few days of positive illness, and a week of convalescence, she had an ample opportunity of appreciating the value of those domestic blessings and privileges, which had hitherto been obscured by the more brilliant pleasures of fashion and the world.

This temporary and forced seclusion from society occurred, too, at the time when Mabel was first beginning to be conscious of the monotony which existed in those gay circles, which to Louise constituted the world. A certain fondness for admiration, and a natural gratification at the large share of it which

her position and charms excited, had served for a time to blind her to the insipidity of the sources from whence it was bestowed; and the attractions of dress, excitement, and display, enlisted her interest so long as they continued to be novelties. But she had too much freshness of feeling to find any lasting pleasure in the same unvaried round of engagements, especially as her intellect occasionally rebelled at the endless repetition of ball-room nonsense, which constituted the conversation of Mrs. Leroy's set.

The power of habit is strong, however, and she probably would not have had the force of will to break through the charmed ring of fashion, had not necessity laid its iron hand upon her. Her cheerful and loving disposition now found the means of both receiving and conferring pleasure in her home, and her conscience more than once reproached her for previous neglect of the spot, to which her presence, even as an invalid, evidently had the power to impart sunshine.

Aunt Sabiah was like a new being, now that she had the happiness of Mabel's society and the occupation of officiating as a nurse. Mr. Vaughan went later to his office in the morning, and passed his evenings with his family in the library, where the numerous charts, which usually engrossed his mind, were never once unrolled. As for Harry, he seemed suddenly relieved from his wonted press of convivial engagements, and found time to read aloud to his aunt and Mabel, translate German songs for the latter, and entertain himself and torment Sabiah by rallying her upon the subject of the ill-shaped stockings which constituted her favorite knitting work, and which, although displaced in the parlor by some more elegant employment, were gladly resumed in the retirement of an invalid's room. Their distorted calves and shrivelled ancles afforded Harry's fancy continual play, as to the sort of animal for whose use they might be intended; and although he never called forth any other than the invariable retort, that "it was a poor leg that would n't shape its own stocking," he seemed quite contented to have the war of wits all to himself. So happy was he, apparently, under this new order of things, that he

seldom left the house for any great length of time, except when warned away by the arrival of Mrs. Leroy, who made a daily visit of bustle and inquiry, and the rattling of whose flounces was usually the signal for her brother to walk off, whistling an opera air.

Louise was half provoked at the contentment with which Mabel submitted to a week's imprisonment; more especially as she felt herself in some degree called upon to enliven her seclusion now and then with her presence, a species of self-sacrifice which she found intolerably irksome. She always contrived, however, to make some plausible apology for the shortness of her visits, and came and went with such graceful ease, and so many affectionate inquiries and complimentary messages, that Mabel was very naturally gratified by her attentions, and far from disposed to question her sincerity.

But the very circumstance which repelled Mrs. Leroy, opened a new source of happiness to her children, who now, for the first time, began to enjoy the privileges of a grandfather's house. Mabel sent for them occasionally during her short illness; and though Harry thought it a bore to have Alick poring over a book in the corner of the room, or staring moodily out of the window, and aunt Sabiah was sure that Murray's noise would throw Mabel into a fever-fit, these visits served, on the whole, to establish natural relations between the boys and the different members of the family, and to sow the seeds of that future influence which each was destined to exercise upon all the rest. How far this experience of domestic joys, with the reflections and sentiments to which it gave rise, might have served to divert Mabel's mind from the enjoyments of gay life, and dispose her to serious and lasting considerations of her own responsibilities and powers, it is impossible to determine; for by the time she was restored to health, and consequently to society, a new weight was added to the scale of influence heretofore possessed by the outward world, and a new sentiment engrossed both her intellect and heart, to the exclusion of all rival claims.

Lincoln Dudley returned unexpectedly to the city, and

Mabel met him under circumstances calculated to encourage and increase the romantic interest she had long cherished for her brother's friend.

A birth-night ball was given by one of her young friends, who, not content with urging Mabel's attendance, both by note and message, came herself to protest against the disappointment of being refused. Mabel had not been exposed to the evening air since her illness, and the invitation was only accepted with the proviso, on the part of her father, that she should not dance. Louise declared that, under such conditions, it would be better to stay at home; but Mabel, with her usual amiability, was glad to gratify her friend on such easy terms.

She was surrounded by a gay group of flatterers, when she first caught sight of a gentleman, who, leaning against a mantelpiece with an easy and self-possessed air, appeared to be leisurely scanning the assembly. Perhaps there was a magnetic power in those dark, dreamy eyes, for, at the moment when Mabel glanced at the spot where he stood, they were fixed upon her with a glance of scrutiny as well as admiration. When she next observed him, however, he was conversing in an animated manner with a sprightly lady, who evidently found great pleasure in his conversation.

Had his previous criticism of Mabel been less marked, he could scarcely have failed to engage her attention, he was so very unlike any one she had ever met before. His personal appearance was striking, for, although scarcely of the medium height, his figure was well-formed and graceful, while his attitude and manners denoted an independence, and a freedom from conventional restraint, which distinguished him amid the company as one who could venture to dispense with the minor rules of etiquette. Nevertheless, he was courtly in his demeanor, especially towards ladies, and had evidently the power of making himself generally agreeable—for, as Mabel continued her ob ervations, she could not fail to remark the eager reception which his civilities met with from persons of various ages and tast s.

He soon disappeared amid the crowd, however, and the

thoughts of the city belle were once more engrossed by the little throng of admirers who were congratulating themselves upon her reäppearance in society, and who remained true to their allegiance, in spite of the music and dancing in an adjoining saloon.

It was with some surprise, therefore, that she felt the light touch of a fan upon her shoulder, and turning, found Mrs. Leroy beside her, accompanied by the stranger, who had evidently sought Louise for the purpose of obtaining an introduction to her sister.

Either Louise, in her haste to return to the dance, failed to pronounce his name in an audible tone, or a little confusion on Mabel's part prevented her catching the sound distinctly; at all events, she remained quite in ignorance of the fact that she was making the acquaintance of Dudley.

The self-possessed serenity of his manners, however, quickly restored her wonted composure; and she knew not how it was, that before many minutes she found herself engaged in a conversation wholly free from the restraint usually consequent upon an abrupt and hasty introduction. Neither did she attempt to account for the fact that, one after another, even the boldest among her attendant beaux retreated to the ball-room or elsewhere, leaving Dudley in full possession of the field.

She only knew that she was listening to one, who, in beauty of language, originality of thought, and play of fancy, was, in comparison with those who had just left her side, like a being of a different order in nature; and, flattered at finding herself the object of attraction to a superior mind, and inspired, perhaps, by the glance of Dudley's eloquent eyes, she felt conscious of mental aspirations which her intercourse with society had never before awakened. Finding that she did not dance, Dudley obtained a seat for her, and leaning against an opposite window-frame in his wonted easy and half-indolent attitude, continued to exert his own brilliant powers of conversation, at the same time emboldening her, by his apparently careless address, to do justice to that native grace and force of intellect with which she was amply endowed.

Not until Mr. Leroy, who chanced to be present on this occasion, came to inform her that the carriage was waiting, and Louise also in readiness to depart, did she realize the length of time in which she had been so agreeably entertained; and, although the acquaintance of an evening only, she could not conceal from herself the satisfaction she felt at Dudley's parting assurance that he hoped to have the pleasure of soon seeing her again.

Harry, contrary to expectation, had not made his appearance; detained, as it proved, by some friends whom he met at his club; and it was not until the next day at dinner that Mabel had any opportunity to speak to him concerning the occurrences of the evening. Her communications then were somewhat involuntary, and only drawn from her by pointed questions on his part. He compelled her at length, however, to acknowledge the new acquaintance she had formed, and even drew her on to give a somewhat minute description of the individual. After amusing himself with her conjectures concerning him, and especially her suspicion that he must be a poet, because he had dark eyes, was guilty of long hair, and some little eccentricities of dress, and was, moreover, very agreeable, he astonished her with the abrupt remark, "In a word,—you have seen Lincoln Dudley, and the satisfaction seems to be mutual."

A glow of delighted surprise overspread Mabel's face at the first part of Harry's announcement, while a quickly succeeding blush betrayed her sensibility to Dudley's good opinion. Aunt Sabiah at once became interested to learn Mabel's opinion of one who had impressed her most favorably. Mr. Vaughan had some curiosity concerning Harry's friend, and Harry himself was disposed to ply Mabel with further questions.

But Mabel perseveringly evaded all inquiries, and at length contrived to change the topic of conversation. It continued none the less the subject of her thoughts, however.

There is, perhaps, no flattery to which a young girl is so susceptible, as that of finding herself an object of interest to a man some years her senior, possessed of a superior mind, and, moreover, one of the most popular and influential members of

the society in which she moves. More especially is this the case, when natural refinement of thought and feeling have fitted her for the enjoyment of more elevated and intellectual pleasures than those which are ordinarily furnished in the world of fashion. Even Louise, and the frivolous set with which she had entire sympathy, felt the honor which Mr. Dudley's attentions were capable of conferring, and diligently strove to attain them; for his social standing was as confirmed as his abilities were acknowledged. How much more highly, then, might Mabel be expected to appreciate the man, who satisfied at once the demands of the most select circles, and inspired that involuntary respect which youth is ever ready to offer at the shrine of genius.

Dudley's genius, indeed, was of a most universal character. Educated mostly abroad, passing rapidly from one school of knowledge to another, viewing European society in all its phases, and profiting by opportunities which are open to but few, he had become cosmopolitan in his habits, artistic in his tastes, completely versed in the knowledge of society, and everywhere fitted to shine. Those who knew him best declared him qualified for success in whatever profession he might adopt; but, although now nearly thirty years of age, his choice was yet undetermined.

Thus, at the time of his introduction to Mabel, he was still a gentleman of leisure, enjoying a moderate income, which was sufficient for the wants of one who, though fastidious and luxurious in his mode of life, was not disposed to reckless extravagance, and whose weight and influence in society were, strange to say, wholly independent of wealth.

We shall soon see the effect which this uncommon influence had power to produce upon the young and enthusiastic Mabel.

Her acquaintance with him ripened rapidly. His intimacy with Harry, and the certainty of a cordial reception at Mr. Vaughan's house, would alone have favored this. But, although he frequently made one of their family circle at dinner, and was received at all hours with the familiarity of a privileged guest, these were not the only occasions which afforded

him the opportunity of exciting Mabel's interest, and winning her confidence. She met him everywhere in society; and his singular powers of fascination were never more successfully exercised than when, amid the distractions of a crowded assembly, he would now and then seek her side, and, for a longer or shorter time, as the case might be, enchain her thoughts, enkindle her imagination, or excite her merriment, by drawing upon his seemingly inexhaustible stores of information, poetry, wit, and satire. He never danced; and from the period of Mabel's introduction to him her love of this amusement became less engrossing. Not that he sought to win her from gayer pleasures by the charm of his conversation, or strove to monopolize any considerable portion of her time. On the contrary, he had too much delicacy and tact to make his attentions conspicuous; and his preference and admiration were only to be inferred from the eagerness and self-gratulation with which he availed himself of those accidental opportunities which chance or good fortune might throw in his way.

But, while Mabel's general popularity continued undiminished, and she was still the ornament and life of the ball-room, her face was never animated by a more brilliant glow than when, owing to a pause in the music, or a casual movement among the company, she found herself released from her recent partner in the dance, and brought within the magic influence which Dudley's musical voice and eloquent eye had power to exercise upon her imaginative spirit.

All the other events of the evening might well serve to minister to her vanity and self-love, but these little episodes had a deeper significance, and produced a more subtle and lasting effect upon her heart and life.

A new ambition, as well as a new sentiment, had been suddenly awakened; and the young girl, who a month before could scarcely credit the triumph which had placed her beyond the rivalry of fashionable competitors, now felt a deeper thrill of gratified pride as she became conscious of those more ennobling gifts, which caused her to be appreciated by a man of rare cultivation and fastidious taste.

A fresh impulse was thus given to mental powers which had hitherto lain dormant; and although the routine of her daily life underwent little change, a close observer might detect many an indication of the new direction which had been given to her motives and aims, and the unwonted interest which was imparted to every scene in which Dudley played a part.

And while the charm which his presence exercised in the gayer circles effectually vanquished the hesitation with which she resumed her round of fashionable engagements, the ascendency of his empire over her thoughts was no less perceptible in her moments of retirement and meditation. The topics on which he had awakened her interest became the subject of after thought; the books from which he had quoted, frequently lay open upon her dressing-table, and the little apartment so choicely furnished by Harry was frequently resorted to for the more careful study of those works of art which possessed the merit of having been selected by Dudley.

Mr. Vaughan, who had been over-anxious on account of his daughter's health, felt too deep a satisfaction in her entire restoration to complain of his deserted fire-side, and patiently betook himself to the usual resource afforded by his papers and charts. Harry, at first gratified by his friend's evident admiration of his sister, began at length to weary of the subordinate part which he filled in relation to them both, and occasionally. in the domestic circle as well as the public assembly, would quietly absent himself from their society, without being much missed by either party. Miss Sabiah, whose prejudices were all in Dudley's favor, forbore to utter any reproaches at the thoughtless and unintentional neglect which sometimes fell to her lot, and fostered her niece's growing preference by the unqualified praise which she bestowed upon its object.

What wonder, then, that Mabel, unquestioned, unchecked, and unwarned, lent herself without fear or doubt to the emotion of the hour? What wonder if he, whom all the world admired as the scholar, the poet, and the wit, became in her eyes the noble, the generous, the true, and the disinterested man which he should have been,—but which, alas! he was not?

With all his varied acquisitions, — his knowledge, taste, culture and refinement, — with all his appreciation of the beautiful, both in art and nature, and all the seeming fairness of a reputation which knew no stain, there yet lurked within the well-springs of his being a secret but fatal poison, dwarfing all his higher purposes, and blighting all his nobler hopes.

Free from all outward forms of vice, he had, nevertheless, no true love of virtue; bowing at the shrine of female loveliness, he had no high faith in woman; and scorning the world in which he lived, he had no power to rise above it.

Early distrust of all things good had palsied the noblest gifts of nature; and the life which might have been a blessing to mankind had thus far proved a failure.

And shall Mabel's trusting heart be exposed to this chilling influence? Shall the young mind yearning for truth and knowledge share the sophistries of a perverted intellect? Shall the soul open to great and lasting impressions find all its generous aspirations quenched in the cold reasoning of a false experience?

Ambition, self-love, pride of heart, a deceived imagination, and a host of worldly allies, will urge her on in the dangerous path which her feet seem doomed to tread. But one shall meet them by the way, a childlike form, clad in holy faith, who shall oppose them with the gentle might of an humble heart, a pure life, and a whispered prayer. Unequal seems the contest, but it is God who giveth the victory.

CHAPTER X.

A thousand pretty ways we 'll find
To mock old Winter's starving reign;
We 'll dress his withered cheeks in flowers,
And on his smooth bald head
Fantastic garlands bind. MRS. BARBAULD.

ABOUT a fortnight after the period of Dudley's return to the city, the patience of Miss Vaughan and the good nature of the whole family were put to a somewhat severe test, by an instance of Mabel's generous but inconsiderate hospitality.

Some children, at the same hotel where Mrs. Leroy resided, were seized with a prevailing epidemic, and Mabel, hearing her sister complain of a circumstance which threatened the health of the boys, cordially urged their coming to their grandfather's, to remain until the danger of infection should have passed. The little fellows were delighted to exchange the restrictions of the nursery for the freedom they enjoyed in Mr. Vaughan's spacious house, and their mother was only too eager to take advantage of a proposal which freed her from a most unwelcome responsibility. They came at once, therefore, accompanied by Lydia Hope, who, in spite of her abrupt dismissal, still continued in Mrs. Leroy's service. Louise's temper being always subservient to her selfish convenience, Murray's pleadings had scarcely been needed to induce her to retain in her employment a girl of such unquestioned capability as Lydia; and although it was only by the exercise of great self-control that the latter could receive her mistress' concession in a becoming spirit of gratitude and humility, she felt amply repaid for the effort, in the opportunity now afforded her of spending some weeks in the home of her youthful benefactress.

This invasion of the domestic peace was, at first, endured with a very good grace by the whole household; but Murray's riotous behavior, and Alick's dogged obstinacy, soon gave rise to difficulty and disturbance. Mr. Vaughan escaped the annoyance by shutting himself up in his library, and Harry, after amusing himself awhile by sharing the boys' noisy sports, exciting their spirits, and often involving them in quarrelsome disputes, would hurry out of the house, leaving others to reap the fruits of the mischief which he had sown. Miss Sabiah and the much tormented servants were the chief sufferers from the introduction of these unruly and rebellious inmates; for Mabel, when not engrossed with other objects, seldom failed to find pleasure in the companionship of her young guests. It was true, she was often called upon to quiet the disputes and reconcile the disagreements which were continually arising, but she had a happy, careless way of settling every vexed question to the satisfaction of all parties; and by a mingling of kindness and authority she contrived to exercise a certain degree of government over her little nephews.

This restraining influence was due, in part, to the respect which her consistent truthfulness inspired in children who had hitherto been subjected to a system of artifice and bribery, and still more to the cordial interest with which she occasionally entered into their plans and participated in their enjoyments; for, preöccupied as her mind might be, nothing could dispel her earnest love of childhood and her sympathy in its pleasures.

Thus a long-talked-of sleigh-ride, to which the boys had been looking forward from the commencement of the winter, was anticipated with scarcely less zest by Mabel; and the snow-storm, which was its precursor, was hailed by her, as well as by the children, with unfeigned satisfaction.

It commenced falling at dusk, and the next morning the entire city was decked in a rich garb of white, untrodden snow, which certainly presented a tempting prospect to pleasure-seekers, of all ages. Before noon, Broadway and the principal avenues were thronged with sleighs of every shape and hue, which, with their joyous occupants and eager, prancing horses,

gave to the scene the aspect of a Carnival; while among the many rich and gorgeous equipages, none was to be seen more graceful in its style, or more complete in its appointments than that which contained the happy, blooming Mabel and her triumphant and excited little companions.

They glided rapidly up and down the principal thoroughfares, threading a swift course among the crowd of huge, open omnibuses, gay with decorations and laden with passengers; fashionable turn-outs, with liveried servants, and rich draperies of fur; miniature boats, drawn by fast horses, and driven by fast young men;—in a word, vehicles of all descriptions, and every grade of pretension, thus suddenly introduced upon the scene of action, and rivalling one another in beauty, grotesqueness, display, or speed.

"See!" cried Murray, springing to his feet in the enthusiasm of his joy, "there's mamma, with Miss Vannecker, in Mr. Earle's new sleigh. Drive faster, Donald!" shouted he to the coachman, "drive faster, and see if we can't beat those gray horses ahead!" and as they dashed gaily past Mrs. Leroy's party, and, one after another, distanced all competitors, Mabel was obliged to grasp the arm of the excited child, lest in the exuberance of his spirits he should lose his balance and be thrown from the sleigh.

"Look, aunt Mabel," exclaimed the equally observing, but more composed Alick, "look at that beautiful little white seashell that seems to be cutting through foam; the wolf's robe, the horse, and even the harness, as white as the snow itself. Oh, that is the handsomest of all! Mr. Dudley is driving, and he sees us, I am sure he does,—he is trying to catch up!"

"But he can't?" cried Murray, whose attention was attracted by this new rival, "I'll bet he can't beat our bays, won't you, aunt Mabel?"

"He will, though," said Alick, who was carefully measuring the chances.

Mabel's heightened color and kindling eye betokened the interest with which she watched the race, but she was far from sharing Murray's disappointment when the snow-white

steed gradually gained upon them; and if she experienced any mortification at the consciousness of approaching defeat, there certainly was no evidence of it in the brilliant smiles with which she welcomed Dudley, as the little equipage finally came alongside.

The latter, on his part, seemed indisposed to make any show of success; but, satisfied with having thus achieved a parallel position, continued, in spite of obstacles, to maintain it for some minutes; a species of compromise which, flattering and agreeable as it might be to Mabel, was far otherwise to her impetuous little nephew, who, still anxious to achieve a victory, persisted in exclaiming to the coachman, "Hurry up, Donald! — whip 'em up!"

The man, however, who read a contradictory order in the expression of his mistress' countenance, as she responded to Dudley's congratulation upon the pleasures of the day, forbore pressing his horses to the top of their speed, — a fact of which Murray soon became conscious. "See here, Al!" exclaimed he, after an interval which he had occupied in clumsily moulding a snow-ball, for which a huge drift furnished the material, "I'll make 'em go!" Then, watching an opportunity when Mabel was most deeply engrossed with some object to which Dudley had directed her attention, he raised himself upon the front seat, and flung his missile at the head of one of the horses. His aim proved as accurate as its effect was instantaneous. The spirited and startled animal gave one wild leap, then dashed suddenly forward; and the panic being thus communicated to its mate, the pair were, in an instant more, rushing madly down the wide avenue, clearing for themselves a passage through the quickly-parting throng of vehicles, but utterly beyond the control or guidance of the coachman.

Meanwhile, in another part of the city, and under circumstances of a wholly different character, a pair of watchful, thoughtful eyes were busily engaged in scanning the various individuals and scenes which came within the scope of the observer's vision. It was a limited prospect, of no very inviting nature; but, such as it was, little Rose Hope had found in it ma-

terial for thought and study during many a long year. The dingy shop, which constituted her mother's principal support, was situated in a narrow street, and the floor of the sunken building was considerably below the level of the sidewalk. Thus, the cheerful sun, which rose behind the house, and set behind that on the opposite side of the street, never found its way into the close, cellar-like apartment where the Widow Hope sold needles, tape, and various other articles of trifling value, including candy of her own manufacture.

There were two windows to this room, both fronting the street. One contained samples of the widow's scanty stock in trade, arranged and re-arranged many times a year, for the purpose of producing a more marked effect upon her patrons, but seldom diminished by an active custom, or increased by dint of surplus capital. A few cards of buttons, discolored by exposure, or soiled by time; a few clay pipes, in an earthen mug, which had long been deficient in a handle; with here and there a paper of pins, a skein of coarse thread, or a last year's almanac, sufficed to give the public an intimation of what might be found within.

Besides these articles of positive significance, there were some little attempts at ornament, which should not be omitted, as they constituted the more marked tokens of Mrs. Hope's establishment. These were two clumsy wooden figures, — the one representing a parrot, gorgeous in green and yellow paint, which, in aristocratic and proud disdain of its unworthy surroundings, seemed to challenge the passer-by to remove it to a more congenial sphere; the other, a laughing, portly, old sailor, who, with his hands on his sides, and his feet in the position for commencing a hornpipe, appeared resolved to be jolly, in spite of circumstances.

But the parrot had maintained its dignity, and the sailor his light-heartedness, for years, without this commendable perseverance having won a purchaser for either.

These decorations were hung out as symbols for the public generally; but for the immediate neighborhood, the opposite and ungarnished window had a deeper and far more impressive

meaning; for here might invariably be seen the little arm-chair of the invalid child, whose emaciated face was as familiar as the day, to every individual who frequented the narrow street.

Few were so indifferent, so thoughtless, or so hurried, as to pass the widow's shop without bestowing a kindly glance upon one who was the object of universal love and compassion. Little children, on their way to school, paused a moment to look smilingly up at the well-known window, assured of an answering smile in return; old women pressed their faces against the glass and spoke a word of inquiry or kindness; and hard-faced men assumed a softened air while they exchanged some friendly signal with Rosy. Or if, as was sometimes the case, the arm-chair was vacant for a day, many an eye missed the little invalid from her accustomed place, and peering anxiously into the room beyond, wondered how it fared with the child.

Thus, a good understanding had come to subsist between Rose and the humble neighborhood in which she lived; and, who shall measure the priceless value of that chain of tender, though often unspoken friendships, which the force of human sympathy had wrought from out the hard material of busy life?

More numerous than usual were the tokens of pleasure and congratulation which greeted her on the morning after the snow-storm. For some days past she had been absent from the window, confined to her bed in the little room behind the shop; but this bright morning found her better, and her re-appearance was observed and hailed with general satisfaction.

The men who were removing the snow from the sidewalks, paused now and then, and leaning on their shovels looked up, as if to bespeak her approbation of their work; the women who came out with their pitchers to meet the noisy milk-boy, nodded a kindly good-morning, as they caught sight of her welcome countenance; and the milk-boy himself, despite his somewhat surly countenance, forbore the customary harsh cry as he paused at the shop door, and patiently awaited the widow's coming, whistling in the meantime a popular air, and glancing

good-naturedly up at Rosy, as he thrashed his arms to and fro to keep himself warm.

These and many other familiar greetings were responded to by Rose, with her usual touching smile; but now and then some simple incident served to call up a deeper glow of animation or pleasure. Such was the appearance of a little deaf and dumb child, who was in the habit of daily presenting himself at her window, tapping on the glass to attract attention, then making various gesticulations of delight when Rose feigned a sudden surprise at seeing him, and whose happiness on this morning, reached its climax upon his being summoned within to receive a bit of crisp, brown candy, which she had begged for him from her mother. The little fellow was one of Rose's most devoted friends; and, among those with whom she had never exchanged a word, he had but one rival to her partiality. This was a tall and rosy-faced youth, the driver of a heavy team, which, punctual to a moment, might be regularly seen emerging from beneath an opposite arch-way.

On the present occasion the passage was so much impeded by snow as to create some doubt in Rosy's mind, whether the young teamster might not be deterred from venturing forth to his daily duties. But no; just as the clock struck eight, the spirited leader appeared in sight, flinging the snow like powder from his hoofs, and tossing his wavy mane as if in defiance of obstacles. The sun, which never shone on Rosy's side of the street, was reflected in glittering rays from the brazen knobs that ornamented the head-piece and bridle of the noble animal and which, thickly set and polished to the last degree, dangled and glistened like a dandy's watch-chain. Not a whit less proud were the step and bearing of the shaft-horse, a fit companion and a perfect match to the tall and well-shaped leader; and both, in truth, formed a striking contrast to the broken-down and half-starved hacks which performed most of the draught labor of the city. Rose had watched and hailed their approach for so many successive days and months, that she had come to feel a sort of ownership in the handsome pair; a sentiment which acted, perhaps, as a bond of sympathy between her

and their smart young driver, who took no small pride in their fine forms, glossy coats, and perfect training. There was something healthy and cheery about the whole establishment, and especially in the ruddy face of the teamster, who, standing upright and firm, issued punctually from beneath the archway, a fit type of honest labor coming forth to its daily toil.

The horses always made their exit with a slow and stately pace, but the moment they gained the street the lad would crack his long cart-whip, with a sound which made the neighborhood ring, but which was a token of his coming intended for Rosy's ear, if one might judge by his cheerful smile and wave of the hand in the direction of her window, while the horses, which seldom suffered from the application of the lash, pricked up their ears as if at the sound of music, and broke into a brisk and voluntary trot.

To Rosy, who had no opportunity of seeing the costly equipages which were thronging the great avenues of the city, and the courteous salutations which were being exchanged in the world of fashion, there was nothing more imposing than the bearing of these working steeds, nothing more truly kind and courtly than the demeanor of her assured friend, the healthy and robust teamster.

The passage of this and many similar vehicles, however, of clumsy construction, and moving on wheels in defiance of the snow, soon had the effect of marring the purity and roughening the surface of the streets in this, the business quarter of the city, and the view became gradually less fair to the eye than even on ordinary occasions. The day was wearing towards noon, and Rosy's eyes, dazzled by the snow and weary from past sleeplessness, were closed in momentary slumber, when she was startled by a rushing noise, accompanied by the sound of bells in rapid motion, and a sudden cry of alarm. In a moment more a pair of unmanageable horses might be seen rushing furiously down the street, dragging after them a light but richly ornamented sleigh, gay with showy trappings and the rich dresses of its occupants. It was in vain that the skilful coachman endeavored to guide the frightened animals, which bound-

ed forward in uncontrolled terror, threatening the destruction of the whole party. As they approached the widow's shop their driver made a final effort to check their progress, by turning them suddenly under the opposite arch-way, but the attempt was ineffectual; they bounded aside, bringing one of the runners of the sleigh upon a heap of bricks which lay, just beyond the sidewalk, deceitfully covered with snow, and the vehicle was at once overturned. Fortunately, however, for its inmates, they were all, with the exception of the coachman, who still clung to his reins, thrown upon a soft snow-bank in front of the shop door, and thus escaped wholly uninjured.

A young lady, who was no other than Mabel, was upon her feet in an instant, and, without pausing to shake the snow from her garments, she hastened to the assistance of Murray, who, half buried in snow, was screaming lustily, but making no effort to rise. Alick, however, who had, from the first moment of alarm, shown a manly degree of courage and composure, had already dashed the snow from his own clothes and bounded off to recover Mabel's muff, which was tossed to some little distance, and the ostrich feather, which had escaped from Murray's hat, and was borne by a gust of wind rapidly down the street.

"Why, what a splendid fall we have had, and how beautifully we came down in the snow, didn't we, Murray?" exclaimed Mabel, speaking in a gay tone for the encouragement of her little nephew, and at the same time lifting him from his soft resting-place to the side-walk; then, as he still continued to cry so loudly as to attract the attention of a crowd of people who were rapidly collecting around the scene of the accident, she hastily lifted the latch of the widow Hope's door, hesitating whether or not to seek shelter within. At the same moment she caught sight of Rosy, looking eagerly from the window and beckoning, as if inviting them to enter. This hospitable indication decided her; and, leading Murray by the hand, and calling to Alick to follow, she stepped quickly into the shop, — too quickly, indeed, for, in her haste, she failed to perceive the little step downward from the side-walk, and would have fallen but for the support afforded by the

door-latch, while Murray, startled by the loud ringing of the shop bell, and stumbling at the unexpected descent, was thrown head-foremost upon the floor. This inauspicious entrance alarmed the widow Hope, whose slow movements now brought her upon the scene, where her offers of assistance proved very acceptable. The little party indeed, in spite of their recent deliverance from danger, were in a somewhat deplorable condition. Murray was, in reality, slightly bruised by his second fall, and, although he could scarcely cry any louder than he had done before, he made as much tumult as possible, and required all Mabel's attention. It was almost unconsciously, therefore, that the latter was relieved of her cloak, now dripping with the fast melting snow, and it was not until the child was somewhat quieted that she even thought of attempting to remove her delicate gloves, which, thoroughly soaked, were clinging obstinately to her half-frozen fingers. Her bonnet, also, was so crushed as to be almost shapeless, Murray had lost a shoe, and Alick, although he made no complaint, had grazed his knee against the pavement, which he had struck in falling.

These causes of discomfiture, trifling as they were, created no little excitement in the contracted limits which the shop afforded; and for some minutes a general confusion prevailed, of which Rose was a silent spectator, her infirmities disabling her from being of any service. A chair was at length procured from the back room for Mabel, who, disencumbered of bonnet and cloak, soon made herself quite at home, with Murray sitting on her knee, and now gradually becoming soothed and quiet. Alick declined a low seat which was offered him, and, stationing himself directly opposite Rose, stood gazing at her with unmistakable wonder and curiosity.

Mabel's only anxiety now was for the safety of the coachman, who soon, however, appeared at the door unharmed, but presenting a rueful countenance, as he informed her that his master's sleigh lay an utter wreck upon the sidewalk.

"No matter, Donald," answered Mabel promptly, "since we are all safe."

"But what shall be done, Miss Mabel?" inquired the man; "how will you get home?"

"What has become of the horses?" asked Mabel, with difficulty restraining a smile at the man's utterly disconcerted countenance.

"They are just at the end of the street, Miss, at a poor kind of a livery, but there is n't a sleigh to be had hereabouts — none, sartain, that would be fit for you and the young gentlemen. I 'm afeard Mr. Harry will be a good deal disappinted, Miss, when he sees what a smash-up we 've had down yonder."

"O, never mind that," said Mabel, good-naturedly; "you did the best you could, Donald. Mr. Harry will be only too glad to see us home in safety." And having learned that the horses were uninjured, and quite sobered from their recent fright, she suggested that Donald should lead them back to their stable, inform the family of what had occurred, and return with the carriage for herself and the boys.

The man hesitated, — expressed a fear that it would take a long time to accomplish this, especially as wheels would not run well on the snow; and at the same time, looked around the dark shop, as if he considered it a very unworthy place of refuge for his young mistress; but Mabel, understanding the look, declared herself quite content to remain in her present quarters during whatever time might be required; "That is," continued she, turning with true courtesy to Mrs. Hope, "if our good friend will give us permission to stay so long."

The pale, rigid features of the widow assumed an expression that might be pronounced sincere, if not positively cordial, as, in answer to this appeal, she expressed in a few words her desire to accommodate, and make them as comfortable as possible in so poor a place.

Thus assured, Mabel dismissed the man, calling to him, however, just as he was leaving the shop, and adding, "Donald, tell Lydia that I should like to have her come in the carriage; and ask her to bring a pair of shoes for Murray, and my cloth cloak."

"Mother," exclaimed Rose, drawing a deep breath the mo-

ment the door was closed, and speaking as if giving vent to suppressed feeling, "Mother, it *is* her! it 's Miss Mabel!"

Mabel turned and looked at the sick child in utter astonishment at this unexpected recognition.

"Aunty," said Alick, approaching Mabel's side and speaking in a whisper, "I should n't wonder if that girl was Rose — Lydia's sister Rose."

"What makes you think so?" asked Mabel, speaking aloud and glancing at Rose as she spoke.

"I know it is," answered Alick, confirming the remark by a confident nodding of his head; "she 's just so little, and sick and good, and sits all day in an arm-chair with a pillow in it."

Mabel rose and moved her seat nearer to that of Rose, at the same time displacing Murray from her knee. "Alick thinks," said she, laying her hand on the arm of Rose's chair, "that this is little Rose Hope; and I begin to think so, too," added she, observing the ray of pleasure which overspread Rosy's face at her words.

The fact certainly needed no other confirmation than that expressed in the little invalid's countenance, as she discovered the recognition to be mutual. "Only think," exclaimed she to her mother, who was incredulously surveying her visitors, "of my seeing Miss Mabel! What will Lyddy say? O, Mother! what will she say when she comes in the carriage!"

Mabel, amused and gratified at the child's enthusiasm, hastened to express her own sense of the good fortune which had brought her to the shop of Lydia's mother, and won that mother's heart by the friendly interest with which she spoke of her daughter's capability and faithfulness.

Meantime Alick, contrary to his usual custom with strangers, entered into eager conversation with Rose, betraying, in a rapid series of questions, a knowledge of the sick child's tastes, habits, and character, which, together with his unwonted sociability, astonished Mabel, who was unaware of the interest which Lydia's description of her sister had awakened in the mind of the thoughtful boy.

"Is that your slate?" asked he, glancing at one which lay

on the wide window-sill, and whose well-worn frame and scanty bit of pencil attested the frequency of its use; "and is this what has been sold to-day?" he added, pointing to a neat list of figures in one corner. Then, having received an affirmative reply to both inquiries, he continued, "That's your big Bible —it's a real old one, is'nt it? But here's a cunning little book," and he eagerly seized her "Daily Food," which was seldom absent from her side, and opening at the first page commenced reading, but seemed disappointed in its contents, as he quickly threw it aside and looked about him for other objects of interest.

"Don't trouble the little girl, Alick," interposed Mabel, who was struck with Rose's pallor and evident feebleness; "you must remember she is sick and will not like to be tired with questions."

"O, no, no! he will not tire me," said Rose, disclaiming such a possibility with an earnestness which seemed to beseech Mabel not to repress his curiosity.

Alick's eye now fell upon a rough wooden box, upon which he pounced with an eagerness that denoted a knowledge of its contents. "These are the jack-straws, ar'n't they?" said he, looking inquiringly in Rose's face, as he vainly tried to remove the cover.

Rose assured him that he was right, and taking the box from his hand, she slid aside its ingenious fastening, and emptied the neat little articles upon the window sill for his easier inspection.

Alick had jack-straws of his own, but they did not compare with Rosy's in variety, number, or neatness of finish. "Here's the bow!" exclaimed he, as if he recognized a familiar object, "it's finished, and it's a beauty! But where is the arrow? has n't Jack made the arrow yet?"

"Yes, he made one last evening," answered Rose; "but it was too slender, and it got broken; I guess he'll make another to-night."

Murray's attention was by this time attracted. He had hitherto stood at a distance, out of humor and disdainful, but he now came forward a few steps, and leaning on Mabel's

knee, stood on tiptoe and peered over Alick's shoulder at the toys. Rose perceived the motion, and, gently drawing aside, made room for him between herself and the window. Alick was disposed to keep him at a distance and engross the enjoyment of the jack-straws, but yielded at once to Rose's gentle remonstrance, "Let Murray see, too, Alick."

CHAPTER XI.

No mortal doth know
What he can bestow,
What light, strength, and comfort do after him go;
Lo! onward I move,
And, but Christ above,
None guesses how wondrous the journey will prove.

GAMBOLD.

A BRISK conversation, consisting for the most part of questions and answers, was now maintained between the three children; Rose every now and then stealing a glance at Mabel, who was observing the little trio with evident interest. Mrs. Hope had returned to some employment in the kitchen, which had been interrupted by the arrival of her visitors, and Mabel sat quietly watching the progress of this singular intercourse between the children, responding to Rose's occasional glances by a smile of approval and encouragement. She would gladly have taken part in the conversation and expressed in some way her sympathy with Rosy's misfortunes, but she found herself disconcerted at the first attempt, being utterly at a loss how to treat a child whose serious gravity inspired a respect scarcely warranted by her years, and the patient contentment of whose countenance forbade the pity which her infirmities would otherwise have awakened. So she left it to the boys to draw out the singular characteristics of their novel acquaintance, an office for which they proved themselves amply competent.

Rose explained to them the use of various articles of which the jack-straws furnished models, interesting the boys by the clearness of her descriptions, and astonishing Mabel by the intelligence they displayed. Things which could never, by

any possibility, have come within the sick child's observation — gardening utensils, carpenters and joiners' tools, and even complicated pieces of machinery, were explained and their purposes illustrated, with a force and accuracy which fascinated the attention of Alick, and even imparted information to Mabel, while Murray stood leaning on Rose's knee in a listening attitude, his eyes fixed reverently on the face of their youthful entertainer, who sat winding his long glossy curls around her thin and wasted fingers.

It was certainly an incongruous group thus assembled in the widow's shop. The sons of wealth, in gay attire and radiant with health and vitality, drinking in knowledge at the feet of one who, reared in poverty, wasted by disease, and isolated from the world, formed a no less striking contrast to her youthful listeners, from the superiority of her mental powers.

Perhaps Mabel felt conscious of the mortifying deficiencies in her sister's children, for she asked herself, for the first time, how it happened that the boys had never been sent to school, and had been suffered to remain in such deplorable ignorance.

That they were not destitute of intellect, however, was evident from the interest which they both manifested in Rosy's engaging conversation; and the subjects to which the jackstraws had given rise, might have engrossed the whole period of their stay, had not their attention been at length attracted by another object.

A sudden movement caused Alick to hit his head against a sharp corner, and looking up he espied Rosy's engraving, which, removed from the little bed-room, hung against the window frame. He immediately claimed acquaintance with it. "Your picture!" cried he, "the picture of little pilgrim and the angels! Let me see it — do! Lydia has told me about that;" and he stretched forth his hand to snatch it from the nail where it hung. It was beyond his reach, however, and Mabel, after asking Rose's consent, assisted him in taking it down, and placing it in an upright position on the window sill.

As she did so she observed the chaste richness of its oval

frame; and when she resumed her seat, and for the first time saw the picture in a good light, she was struck with the exquisite finish of the engraving, and the simple beauty of the subject.

"Where did you get it?" asked Alick, who, like Mabel, perceived at once how inconsistent it seemed to be with its surroundings.

"It was brought to the hospital while I was there trying to be cured. It belonged to a young gentleman; and a lady, who was one of the directresses, brought it there for me to see. She left it for a week hanging at the foot of my bed, and then it was that the doctor said I never could be cured, and might as well come home again. I had got very fond of the picture, — it told me stories and kept me company, and so, because I loved it, and because I never could be cured, the gentleman (I think it was the lady's son,) sent word for me to keep it always."

"Was n't he good?" exclaimed Alick, with feeling, at the same time looking anxiously into the face of Rose, from whose eyes, as she recalled the past, one or two tears had escaped and were slowly trickling down her cheeks.

"What tells a story?" asked Murray, pulling at Rose's sleeve — "Can the picture speak?"

"It speaks to me," answered Rose, smiling sweetly through her tears. "I can't tell you all it says, but some of the stories are very plain to be seen, — don't you think so?"

"I do n't," answered Murray, with a dissatisfied air, while Alick carefully examined the picture.

"Why, you see," said Rose, "that is little pilgrim going a journey, and those three angels go with him." Here Rose paused, and looked inquiringly and diffidently into the face of Mabel, as if seeking encouragement to continue the story. Mabel answered by rising so as to obtain a better view, while she herself listened attentively to Rose's description of her picture.

Rose went on. "That is Hope," said she, pointing to a cherub figure peering above the clouds, with its hand outstretched, and its eye fixed upon a light spot in the distance,

which seemed intended to represent the glow of a brilliant sunset.

"And what does he say?" asked Murray.

"Oh, he says, 'keep up a good heart, little pilgrim.'"

"And what is that one's name?" inquired Alick, pointing to another on the right, whose head was thrown back, while both eye and hand were turned heavenward in an attitude of rapt devotion.

"That is Faith," replied Rose, and he says, 'trust in God.'"

"But that is the prettiest," said Murray eagerly, placing his finger on the central figure, whose eyes were downward bent, and whose hand was pointing earthward, while the countenance was illumined with the benignant smile of a pure benevolence.

"Yes, that is the prettiest," said Rose, "and the best; that is Charity, or Love, for it goes by both names."

"We'll call it Love, then," said Alick, "won't we?"

"Yes," said Rose, "that is Love."

"And what does Love say to Pilgrim?" continued Alick.

"Oh, a great many things," answered Rose. "It tells him to lend a helping hand to everybody he meets on the way, and do all the good he can, and be patient, and gentle, and kind."

"And is he? Does he do it?"

"Yes, indeed."

"How do you know?"

"Can't you see?" asked Rose — "it is all told in the picture."

The boys looked intently — so did Mabel — but neither detected the proofs which seemed so evident to Rosy. Mabel kept silent, but the boys confessed their ignorance.

"Don't you see," said Rose, after a pause, "all the flowers that have sprung up behind him as he goes; the path is dark, and overhung with brushwood, so that he cannot see a step before him on the road; but look where his feet have worn that little track, and you will see all along beside it the flowers that he has strewn there. Some have taken root and grown up tall; there is a rose that has nearly climbed to the top of

that high tree. How sweet it will smell to the next traveller that comes along that way! "Those are his virtues," added Rose, after another pause, during which her listeners stood carefully scanning the objects she had pointed out; "it was Charity that went with him and helped him strew the flowers, — don't you see he has a basket in his hand? that contains the roots and seeds, and Charity shows him the best places to plant them in, and how to make them grow."

"He's got a cane," said Murray — "what does he carry a cane for?"

Rose looked up at Mabel and smiled. "That is the staff of faith," said she, "he leans on it when he is tired."

"Where is he going?" asked Alick. "Is it a long journey."

"Not very long; some people find it very short. He is going to that city in the distance; don't you see it with the light shining on its walls and towers? That is the Eternal City, Alick — the city of our God," added she, solemnly, laying her thin hand on Alick's arm; "we are all travelling on the same road as pilgrim, — and we must try to strew flowers behind us as we go."

Children are always much impressed with anything in the nature of an allegory. They wholly understand the actual story, while they often catch a dim conception of its hidden meaning. Murray was only capable of comprehending the former, but Alick caught an idea, faint indeed, but still impressive in its character, of the lesson which Rose's story had partially revealed to his untaught soul; and Mabel, who, in spite of good principles and high aspirations, was a child in religious experience, felt awed by the simple teachings of virtue, and subdued by the sublime power of truth. Thus Rose herself had unconsciously planted seed by the wayside; and who shall tell when and how such seed may spring up into everlasting life?

There was a silence in the little company for a short time after Rose had finished; then Murray yawned, as children will yawn when they have been agreeably entertained and find the entertainment suddenly withdrawn. "How soon are

we going home?" asked he of Mabel, "I'm hungry."

"Hush!" said Mabel softly, unwilling to make further claim upon the widow's hospitality by the expression of any new wants; we shall go soon; it is time for Donald to be here now;" then bethinking herself of the best mode of repaying those attentions which she had already received, she proposed to make some purchases from the widow's stock. It was difficult to make a selection of articles in any degree appropriate to her station in life, Mrs. Hope's goods being intended for the accommodation of her own humble neighborhood. With the children's assistance, however, she contrived to expend, in trifling purchases, all the money she had in her purse; and Murray had just received into his arms the gorgeous, but long-neglected parrot, when the shop door was suddenly thrown open, and Lydia entered with a flushed and excited countenance.

She was laden with shawls and wrappers, which, in addition to the articles sent for by Mabel, had been despatched by her anxious aunt, and was so breathless with haste and astonishment that Mabel strove in vain to obtain from her an intelligent reply to her inquiries, what had become of the coachman and horses, and why she herself had come thither on foot.

The half-laughing, half-crying girl, overjoyed at the safety of Mabel and the children, and excited to the last degree by the circumstance of their having taken refuge in her mother's shop, could only embrace Rose and the boys by turns, uttering, meanwhile, interjectional phrases, expressive of her own and Miss Sabiah's fears, and the prompt action of Mr. Dudley, whose name was strangely mingled with her exclamations.

Finding it impossible to calm her, Mabel hastily opened the shop door, to satisfy herself whether or not the carriage was in sight, and as she did so, encountered Dudley at the very threshold. She blushed with pleased surprise, not having in the least understood Lydia's broken communication, and the color deepened in her cheeks when he seized her hand with an eagerness that betrayed his anxiety on her account,—an anxiety which evidently had not been wholly quieted by Donald's assur-

ance of her safety. His fears were wholly allayed, however, at the sight of her smiles, and she now learned that the carriage awaited them at some little distance, Mr. Dudley having judged it imprudent to venture on wheels into the narrow, crowded street, encumbered as it was with snow.

He also informed her, in few words, that he had pursued her sleigh as long as he could keep the frantic horses in sight, and then, not being able to recover their track, had, after a fruitless search, hastened to Mr. Vaughan's house, hoping that, though the frightened animals were beyond the coachman's control, instinct would guide them thither. He arrived there but a few moments in advance of Donald, and having learned from him the welcome tidings of her safety, resolved still further to assure himself of it by accompanying him on his return to the spot where she had found shelter.

"What a wretched place you have been obliged to wait in!" exclaimed he, looking down into the low, dark shop, and seeming to shrink from its close atmosphere.

"We have been hospitably, and even agreeably, entertained here," answered Mabel; "the boys and I have made the acquaintance of a sick child, who proves to be the sister of their nurse; she is an interesting little creature, — do come in and see her, Mr. Dudley."

"The room seems to be pretty well stocked already, in proportion to its dimensions," answered Dudley, smiling, "especially as you pronounce it to be a sick-room; and in view of the latter fact, Miss Mabel, I feel bound in conscience to hurry you away from this miserable place. I have made myself responsible to Miss Vaughan for your safe return, and a heated, distempered air may sometimes prove as fatal as a pair of runaway horses."

Mabel made haste to repel this suggestion, assuring Dudley that the child's illness was chronic, and not of a contagious character, and that the room, though naturally close, from its low, damp situation, was otherwise comfortable, and in all respects neat.

He smiled complacently at the warmth with which she

defended her place of refuge from unjust aspersions, and, as if to satisfy her that he had no fears on his own account, stepped within the door, and still holding it ajar, awaited her pleasure.

As there was no motive for further delay, the little party were not long in making ready to depart; especially as Mabel had previously resumed her cloak and bonnet, now restored by Mrs. Hope's care to their original appearance, and Lydia had recovered her composure and partially equipped the boys for their return home. Mabel was much touched at the deep feeling evinced by Rose, as she spoke her simple farewell, expressing in a few words how happy the visit had made her, and pressing Mabel's hand to her lips with mingled respect and fervor. "I will come again, Rose," said Mabel, in a low voice.

She would gladly have said more, being anxious to testify in some way the tender sympathy she felt for the little invalid. But Dudley stood looking on; he would mentally accuse her of affectation or parade; so she contented herself with the promise to repeat her visit, and with a lightly spoken good-by, took her friend's offered arm to accompany him to the carriage, leaving the boys to follow with Lydia.

"The fresh air is really delightful," exclaimed she, as the clear, wintry breeze, tempered by the warmth of a noon-day sun, fanned her cheek, which was slightly feverish with the excitement of the morning.

"If I may be allowed to advise,—and you will pardon whatever there may be of selfishness in the suggestion," said her companion,—"I should declare a walk home preferable to a drive, under existing circumstances."

The sight of the carriage, which they had now reached, served to enforce Dudley's opinion. The wheels were so clogged with snow that it was evident they could move but slowly, and in a lumbering manner, through the streets, and as Alick also expressed a preference for walking, it was decided that Murray and Lydia should proceed in the carriage, and the others continue up Broadway on foot.

Although the hour passed in the widow's humble dwelling had been replete with interest, the sudden change from the

confined atmosphere and narrow limits of the shop to the bracing air, active exercise, and brilliant spectacle afforded by the crowded street, had a corresponding effect upon the spirits of Alick and Mabel. The former, whose movements were usually slow and languid, trod with a light step, as if rejoicing in an unwonted share of liberty, which he was, in truth, experiencing, since it was rarely that he went out on foot, except for a short and monotonous walk with Lydia. Availing himself of the license afforded on the present occasion, he would now and then pause to survey at his leisure whatever object attracted his attention, and then bounding forward, overtake his somewhat careless protectors, who, engrossed with each other, left him at liberty to do as he pleased; a freedom of which, however, he took no undue advantage. Mabel, meanwhile, flattered by Dudley's marked interest in her safety, and rejoicing in the exuberance of youthful spirits, excited the increased admiration of her companion by the variety of her conversation and her natural and eager enjoyment of the gay, wintry scene. It was, in truth, the simple and unperverted freshness of this child of nature which had captivated the experienced man of the world. The inborn dignity, grace, and animated sweetness of manner, which had fitted her to take at once a distinguished place in society, might have existed independently of that child-like enthusiasm which was, perhaps, the most interesting feature of her character; but this latter trait had at once been discerned by Dudley, and, cautious as he was of yielding to impressions, its charm had completely fascinated him. So true it is, that a mutual attraction often exists between contrasts.

The prevailing character of the incidents in which their walk invited them to participate, was that of mirth and laughter; but an opportunity soon occurred for the further and more complete development of Mabel's ready and universal sympathies. At just that point in Broadway where the crowd was most dense, and their movements the most hurried, our party suddenly encountered a little boy, ragged, dirty, and bending beneath the weight of an old basket filled with half-burnt coals.

The little urchin was directly in the path of the throng of foot passengers, who were hurrying up and down the side-walk, and in endeavoring to avoid a collision, he stumbled and fell upon one knee, striking his burden heavily upon the pavement. The time-worn and shattered basket had hardly held together before, and now, as he lifted it to resume his progress, it gave way entirely, and its whole contents were scattered in the deep snow which bordered the side-walk. Some of the passers-by laughed, some looked compassionately over their shoulders, and one or two paused for an instant, out of curiosity, to see whether the boy would attempt to repair the misfortune.

"Oh! poor little fellow;" exclaimed Mabel, who reached the spot at the moment of the accident, and whose compassion was at once excited by the expression of blank dismay which overspread his childish face at the sight of his lost and wasted property.

The boy, hearing a kindly voice, and seeing the shadow of some person who evinced a pitying interest by coming to a full stop, looked up from the wreck on which his gaze had been hitherto fixed, and met the glance of Mabel's eye with such a look of appeal as went straight to her heart. It was an innocent countenance, and a sad one, and told a story of want and disappointment somewhere.

"It's a pity!" said Mabel, glancing from the face of the boy to the spilt coal and useless basket; and, as the mournful eyes, now fast filling with tears, still spoke a touching entreaty, a moisture gathered in her own, and her hand, as usual, sought her pocket.

Alick, who had been lingering behind, now came up, and, with childhood's quick instinct, reading the whole story, exclaimed eagerly and confidently, "Oh, Aunt Mabel, do give him some money!"

But alas, the purse was empty; the money had all been spent at the widow's shop! The consciousness of this did not flash upon Mabel, until she had drawn the little silver reticule from her pocket and exposed her destitution; then blushing with mortification and disappointment at having encouraged the

child's hopes, to dash them the next instant, she turned to Dudley, supposing that the act had awakened his observation, and would induce him to supply her deficiencies by a prompt contribution on his part. But the case seemed not to have touched his sympathies, at least not in such a way as to conduce to the boy's benefit. He stood at the distance of a step or two, quietly surveying the scene with an interested and amused air, and, although manifesting no impatience, seemed to be viewing Mabel's proceedings as those of a capricious child indulging a wayward impulse.

Mabel could not be sure whether he perceived her embarrassment; but it being very evident that he felt no disposition to charity, she was reluctantly compelled to restore her purse to her pocket, and leave the child to bear his misfortune as he best might, with no other encouragement than that conveyed in a kind word. "My money is all gone," said she; "I am sorry,—perhaps some other lady will give you a sixpence."

She spoke confusedly, and with evident regret, which increased to actual pain as the little fellow replied, with sad simplicity, "It's very hard to find a lady that'll give me a sixpence."

Grieved as she felt for the little fellow, there was nothing more to be said or done, and the next moment she was continuing her walk, exchanging salutations with gay friends, and listening to Dudley's conversation.

Alick staid behind a moment, to scan the boy's face with his ever-curious eyes, and solace his disappointment, if possible, by saying, "She has spent all her money,—I have not got any either—it's too bad."

"Your compassion is awake I see, Miss Vaughan, like every other amiable emotion," said Dudley, as they proceeded up the street. "You are new to scenes like that yonder, but you will soon, I fear, become accustomed to them, if you go out frequently in New York, especially on foot."

"Oh, I have seen a great many miserable objects already," said Mabel; "enough to make my heart ache; but that little fellow interested me particularly, he had such a plaintive look;"

and Mabel sighed, as her thoughts again recurred to the unspoken appeal which had moved her so forcibly.

"That boy had rather a beautiful countenance," said Dudley; "he reminded me of a most exquisite group I saw in Florence last winter, Picciotti's Beggars. I wish you could see that piece of statuary, Miss Vaughan—I am sure you would appreciate it; it is his masterpiece—a wonderful work of art! I was struck immediately with that boy's resemblance to the younger of the two beggars."

"He was not a beggar!" exclaimed Alick, who had joined them unobserved, and caught Dudley's last word only. "He did n't ask for anything!"

"There are various kinds of begging," responded Dudley, replying to Alick's remark, though not looking at him, or appearing to observe from what quarter the suggestion had proceeded, for he seldom took much notice of children. "That is the most specious, certainly, which addresses itself to the eye and not the ear. That stroke was capitally executed, however," added he, laughing good humoredly; "it would have done credit to one of the junior members of the Ravel troupe. It is astonishing how quickly those little practitioners become adepts in their art."

"Why, you surely do not think—" exclaimed Mabel, in surprise—

"That that was an accident done on purpose?" said Dudley, in continuation of her query, and smiling at her genuine astonishment; "perhaps so—perhaps not;" and he shrugged his shoulders expressively. "At all events," continued he, as if hesitating to pronounce decisively in the present instance, "we will not be severe upon him, since your judgment is evidently in his favor, Miss Vaughan; but these artifices to excite sympathy are no doubt very common. Modern institutions are partially responsible for it; they cry out against street begging, and street cunning rises up in its stead. Ah, they manage these things much better abroad! a few bajocchi will disperse an Italian rabble, and there is the end of it; but here, society is to be reörganized, poverty put down, and I don't know what

not. Very well; I am willing to give philanthropists a fair chance for my part—but if they will put restrictions on our benevolence, the poor must take the consequences, I suppose, if they starve."

And having thus involved what had previously seemed a simple appeal to charity, into a complicated case of political economy, Dudley gracefully and easily waived any further consideration of the difficult question, by resuming his analysis of the merits of Picciotti's Beggars, and leading Mabel's thoughts into the wide field of beauty and of art. Here he was completely at home; and, with his wonderful gift at description, and his unrivalled and varied powers of entertainment, he completely enchained her attention for the remainder of the walk.

That evening, however, as she stood in front of a brilliant fire which was burning in the dining room, and heard the cold wind whistle round the corner of the house, she thought again of the little boy and the spilt coals. He might be an impostor, the very prince of rogues, but, despite her reason, instinct and good heart whispered otherwise, and, do what she would to restrain them, painful visions rose before her of dreary garrets, where half-starved children and despairing mothers crouched beneath scanty coverings, and cried and shivered with the cold.

Mabel's experience and knowledge would not warrant her in deciding the comparative claims of beggars and philanthropists; but one thing at least was certain, misused as her bounty might have been by the boy, it's bestowal would have left a blessing with the giver. As it was, she could only sigh for the poverty which was beyond her reach, and soothe her regret with the newly awakened idea, that a too liberal distribution of money was dangerous, and might defeat the best interests of society. Not that she could persuade herself that it would have done harm in the present case, for she felt an honest conviction of the truthfulness of her first impressions. Who shall say, however, that her heart warmed as readily towards the next child of misfortune that came in her path? or, that the spirit of distrust once awakened in her hitherto unsuspecting bosom could

be easily laid to rest? Rosy was right in saying, that we need in life's pathway an angel guide, to teach us where to plant the flowers of charity. Alas for earth's youthful pilgrims, when a cold and worldly calculation banishes the gentle spirit of human love and sympathy! More fatal still, when the sister spirits of faith and hope give place to gloomy doubts and discouraging suspicions.

CHAPTER XII.

> Who scoffs these sympathies,
> Makes mock of the divinity within;
> Nor feels he gently through his breathing soul
> The universal spirit. R. H. Dana.

Among the engagements of the following week, there was one of a somewhat different character from the gay assemblies which constituted the chief social enjoyment of Mabel's circle. This was a party given on occasion of some family anniversary, by a lady of high position, whose wealth, accomplishments, and superior cultivation, gave her an undisputed preëminence in the eyes both of people of consequence and of those who considered themselves such.

Even Mr. Vaughan was induced to accept an invitation to a house where he would be sure to meet many guests of his own age, and no small number of persons distinguished in the literary and political world. Louise was not willing to lose the honor of being present at an entertainment where the company would undeniably be the most select the city afforded. Harry, while he voted these old Knickerbocker affairs pretty slow concerns, declared it an object to see things done up in good shape once in a while; and Mabel, for all these reasons combined, and, perhaps, also from the knowledge that the hostess was a near connection of Dudley's, looked forward to the evening with unusual interest.

Miss Sabiah was seldom included in the numerous invitations received by her brother's family, not from any intentional slight, but because she had systematically avoided becoming generally known as an inmate of the household, and had nervously shrunk from being found in the drawing-room on reception days. She would never have dreamed, however, of ming

ling in society; and was satisfied, for her part, with the simple enjoyment derived from the sight of her favorite Mabel, richly attired, and appearing on each new occasion more beautiful in the eyes of her aunt. Therefore, on the evening in question, she experienced no small satisfaction from the survey of a superb dress, worn for the first time by Mabel, and her elation reached its height as she observed the ill-concealed envy which it awakened in Louise, who entered the dressing-room just as her sister's toilette was completed. It was no wonder that the partisan spirit of the aunt was gratified, for Mabel certainly outshone herself.

She wore a white flounced silk, each flounce being bordered with a pattern of delicately wrought green leaves and half-blown roses, and the graceful garland of flowers on her hair was in perfect harmony with the Parisian fabric. The waist fitted closely to the throat, where a collar of point lace was fastened with a brilliant spray of diamonds; and sleeves of the same delicate material as the collar, lightly draped her well-rounded arms.

Louise, whose little, fairy-like form never looked so well as in the light and gossamer fabrics in which she floated or whirled through the dance, felt a sharp pang of jealousy, as she noted the almost regal figure of her sister, set off to advantage by the closely-fitting and heavy material which would have severely tested a less exquisite shape than Mabel's.

"I hate to go to these half-and-half parties," said she, in a sharp and irritable tone, as she drew out the folds of her velvet dress to give it a more graceful flow, and straitening her figure at the mirror, tried to believe herself just the right height, and Mabel a little too tall. "One has to dress up as if afraid of the rheumatism, and no wonder, for if ever people do take cold, it is from standing round in corners, as we shall do to-night. It will be shockingly stupid. I've half a mind not to go;" and although she could not resolve to stay away from an entertainment which anybody else thought worth attending, Louise contrived by her ill-humor to make herself and every one about her so uncomfortable, that her friends

were glad at last to arrive at their destination, and to see her established in one of the corners she had spoken of, where, with Victoria Vannecker, and a little knot of companions, she amused herself with making comments upon the company.

The assembly was not large, and there was no music, but, as Harry had foreseen, everything was conducted in good taste, and spacious and superb as were the house and furniture, nothing gave evidence of extraneous ornament, or an attempt at display.

Some of the company had evidently been their hostess' guests at dinner, and coffee was passed round promiscously at quite a late hour.

This circumstance, and the fact that the size and number of the rooms thrown open afforded opportunity for the dispersion of the visitors into little knots, gave the whole assemblage the air of a somewhat overgrown tea-party. A few elderly gentlemen, grouped together on the hearth-rug and occasionally sipping their coffee, were holding a political discussion; and a similar association of literary friends were laughing heartily at a series of amusing anecdotes related by one of their number. A travelled lady and a boyish artist were examining a book of etchings together; and a group of youths and girls, scarcely beyond childhood, had taken possession of the music room, and while one played the piano, the rest were having a merry dance.

These, and various other social scenes, were indicative of the different ages, tastes, and characters, which were blended in the company; and although nonsense, scandal and ill-natured criticism, were not without their representatives, they instinctively felt themselves out of their sphere, and kept in the background; while the assembly, as a whole, was eminently distinguished for harmony, elegance, good breeding, and refinement.

Mabel felt, from the first moment of her entrance, the total dissimilarity between this and most of the fashionable parties which she frequented; but, unlike Louise, at once recognized its superiority. Nor, although the youthful circle which claimed her as its ornament could assemble here but a small number

of its members, did she find herself by any means destitute o. acquaintances.

Dudley's partiality had not only awakened her ambition fo: cultivated society, but had, to some degree, gratified this preference, and already, through his introduction, had she been brought into occasional intercourse with persons of distinction, taste, and learning.

Politicians, artists, noted travellers, titled foreigners, and literary lions in every department, were included in Lincoln Dudley's extensive circle of friends; and more than one individual of some distinction among the present company, now seized the opportunity to revive and strengthen his knowledge of the beautiful girl, whose naturalness of manner, freshness of feeling, and exuberance of thought and fancy, had increased the admiration inspired by her personal charms.

But, although this species of homage was an undoubted triumph, there was no evidence of gratified pride in the demeanor of Mabel, whose sparkling eye and intelligent smile denoted an eager interest and an animated pleasure in the conversation of a select group, of which she was the central attraction. Conscious, as she could not fail to be, of her power of pleasing, she, nevertheless, employed it without affectation or artifice; and in whatever estimation her success might be held, no one could fail to acknowledge that it was fairly won.

Unwilling as Dudley was to yield allegiance to any single object, and often as he absented himself from her neighborhood, to pay his addresses elsewhere, an irresistible attraction drew him back, and a short interval only would elapse, before his clear tones would mingle again in the conversation of the little group, to which his racy and eloquent, or occasionally abrupt and ironical, contributions invariably imparted additional zest; nor did the consciousness of his vicinity fail to give an added glow to Mabel's features, and a renewed lustre to her eye.

"Do you see that magnificent girl yonder?" said an elderly painter of repute, to one whom he knew to be a lover of his art. "I will paint her picture, before the winter is over. I

promise you I shall accomplish the point, and obtain a sitting. How superb she would be as Corinne crowned in the temple!"

"There is talent there," exclaimed a first-rate lawyer, significantly glancing at Mabel, with whom he had been conversing. "She has beat me in an argument, just now, good-naturedly, and without pedantry, too, and before I knew what she was at."

"I would not trust myself against her before a jury, independently of argument," replied the gentleman to whom the remark was addressed.

"Your sister is a young lady to be proud of," said a somewhat taciturn old bachelor, who, standing near Louise, had been silently observing Mabel. "I see she is amiable, as well as agreeable, and dispenses her smiles with equal favor upon all."

"Rather too much so, I should think," said Louise, with a short laugh, "judging from some of her friends. Pray, who is that Father Noah whom she seems to find so interesting?"

"That thin gentleman in the long-bodied coat? I forget his name, — a clergyman, I believe."

Louise now turned to Miss Vannecker, and exclaimed, in a low and half-confidential tone: "It is very ridiculous for Mabel to stand there, directly in the centre of the room, and talk to everybody that chooses to be introduced to her. She'll make some most absurd acquaintances!"

A little later in the evening, when Mabel was listening, in a reverential manner, to the conversation of the interesting clergyman, Louise and Miss Vannecker paused as they were crossing the room, and the former remarked abruptly to her sister: "You have chosen a conspicuous place for holding your court, this evening, my dear; the news-papers to-morrow will describe the assembly room, and say the centre ornament was a flower-piece of exquisite form, consisting of successive tiers of rose-wreaths, surmounted with a garland?"

"Besides," added Miss Vannecker, as if taking it for granted that Louise's remark was designed to be censorious, "it is

very unbecoming to stand directly beneath the gas-light." And having thus rebuked her vanity, they passed on.

Mabel blushed and looked somewhat disconcerted, but innocent of any intention at display, maintained a dignified composure, and, covering her vexation with a smile, confirmed the good opinion already formed of her by her new friend.

Dudley chanced to be standing near, and overheard the rude speeches of Louise and her companion. Always courteous himself, he could not endure rudeness in others, especially when its motive was as palpable as in the present instance; for his knowledge of Louise's character, at once suggested to his discerning mind the jealousy by which she was actuated.

Anxious, therefore, to free Mabel from the slight embarrassment which he detected in spite of her assumed serenity, he availed himself of the first opportunity to invite her to visit the conservatory, which contained a choice collection of plants. Mabel, relieved by the proposal, the thoughtful delicacy of which she fully appreciated, gladly accepted his offered arm for the purpose.

Dudley was just enough of a botanist and florist to make his observations upon flowers attractive and charming; he forbore the use of scientific terms, called them all by their simple and expressive names, and, without sentimentality, understood and expatiated on the poetic and touching language which they were capable of conveying.

There might be minds to which these gifts of nature appealed with deeper significance, but few who could more gracefully express the gratification afforded by them to a refined sense of the beautiful.

While admiring, however, his knowledge of every species of plant, including the rarest exotics, and sympathizing in most of his preferences, Mabel was astonished at his indifference to many of her favorites, especially among the common wild flowers of our fields and woods. She could not resist paying the tribute of affection to these wayside friends, and in answer to his inquiry—which of all the summer blossoms she preferred? she answered frankly, "If you ask me which I love the best,

I must confess, though you will wonder to hear me say so, — the dandelion — the friendly, yellow dandelion."

Dudley smiled incredulously.

"I truly mean so," said Mabel, earnestly; "it comes so early and stays so long. It is earth's golden star of promise, speaking of warmth, and sunshine, and summer. It has such sweet associations, too. Why, did you never," exclaimed she, forgetting for the moment that she was addressing the polished man of the world, — "did you never sit on the grass and make long chains of the hollow stems, and sigh to think how frail they were?"

"Never," replied Dudley with decision.

"Nor tear them to shreds with idle fingers, and float them in the brook to watch how they would curl? Nor pluck the downy seed-vessels, on your way from school, and blow on them three times to see if your mother wanted you?"

"Never," replied Dudley again, in a tone which intimated that his childish reminiscences included no such follies.

"Then you cannot imagine," said Mabel, her enthusiasm a little damped by his manner, "how many happy hours I associate with their common, familiar faces."

"I suppose not; but I nevertheless love flowers for the sake of association," said Dudley; and, stooping down, he picked up a sprig of mignonette, which she had held in her hand a moment before and then thrown negligently away.

Mabel blushed as she observed the action, and if at the same moment she did not feel absolutely ashamed of her love for dandelions, she was ready to confess it a childish folly, for which she had no right to expect the sympathy of grown people.

In the criticism of works of art Dudley was even more skilled than in the analysis of the floral kingdom; and he next directed Mabel's attention to a number of paintings and statues which adorned the spacious hall adjoining the conservatory. Under his tutelage Mabel had already acquired some little skill in judging of an artist's merit, and almost fancied that she could distinguish between the works of rival schools. She was

still so unsophisticated, however, as always to bestow her first thoughts on the subject, rather than the execution of a piece; and her attention was at once attracted by an ancient-looking picture, representing an angel-messenger bearing to Heaven the tidings of a sinner's repentance. The seraphic beauty of the countenance, the joy, love, and holy triumph which it depicted, inspired in Mabel an emotion of religious awe. She gazed at it a moment in silence, then turned from it to her companion, with a look which bespoke her admiration.

"Miserable thing!" observed he, without appearing to notice the sentiment it had awakened in Mabel. I never can see it without smiling at the absurd discussion it has caused. You must know that my honored cousin — he here lowered his voice expressively and looked over his shoulder to see if any of the family were within hearing — has the vanity, or the credulity, to believe that picture a work of one of the old masters. No one, with the slightest knowledge of paintings, could cherish such a supposition for a moment. It is unquestionably a counterfeit, or at most a mere copy."

Whether copy or counterfeit it had its value, as was evident from the emotion it had awakened in Mabel; but she had no further opportunity to examine it. The seraph face having been pronounced the guilty medium of a deception, she was hurried away from it by Dudley, who assured her that it was a daub — a mere imposture, not worth a moment's study.

So, also, in passing judgment on the statues. Two figures of Mercy and Truth absorbed Mabel's notice, and were, in many respects, the finest in the collection; but Dudley could see nothing in the former but a most remarkable distortion in the little finger; and the latter, unless his eye was more incorrect than usual, betrayed a slight disproportion in the size of the throat.

No one could dispute, however, the accuracy with which he pointed out the exquisite finish observable in the painting of a Dutch kitchen, the work of a celebrated artist, or the justice with which he commented upon the remarkable lightness of limb portrayed in a favorite bronze Mercury. For the true enjoy-

ment of art, Dudley evidently considered it necessary to comprehend it in detail. He had no conception of the highest power which it is capable of exercising, restricting its influence, as he did, to the enlightened and aristocratic few, and wholly ignoring its agency in ennobling and elevating the masses.

The conversation naturally passed from art to artists; and as Dudley had an intimate acquaintance with many persons of this profession, he was able to impart much curious and interesting information concerning the labors and struggles, the triumphs and failures of genius.

They now occupied a position where the company, most of whom were promenading the hall, passed successively under their review; and, forsaking abstract topics, he proceeded to entertain her for some time with his comments upon various individuals — their peculiar characteristics, family histories, or public services.

She listened with interested and often amused attention, but at length her eye wandered to the farther end of the hall; and Dudley, observing the direction of her earnest gaze, perceived at once the object that had attracted her notice. An elderly lady, accompanied by a stout and stately military gentleman, had entered the hall at its farther extremity, and was slowly approaching the spot where they stood. She was considerably above the ordinary height of woman, with an erect and imposing figure, while her manner and bearing at once commanded respect by their composed and serene dignity. There was nothing forbidding, however, in her mild and benignant face, shaded and softened by the snowy flutings of her widow's cap, and her features were such as must in youth have rendered her preëminently beautiful. Nor had time had power to dispossess her of personal charms, although she had numbered nearly threescore years and ten. Her skin was still fair, her eye bright, and her silver hair, which was smoothly parted on her forehead, escaped from her cap in the form of a few soft and shining curls, which hung over either cheek. Her step, too, was firm — almost elastic — and her hand rested lightly on the arm of the portly officer

Mabel's eye followed her with curiosity not unmixed with respectful admiration, as moving leisurely up the hall she acknowledged the courtesies of numerous friends, and at length approached the spot which Dudley had chosen as a favorable point of observation.

"Here comes the salt of the earth, Miss Vaughan," said he, in a tone of irony; she is leaning on an arm, too, of the highest respectability."

"They are a noble-looking couple," said Mabel with warmth, at the same time turning to him with an inquiring eye, as if she would gladly hear more concerning them.

"That woman," continued Dudley, "is generallissimo of the forces of modern innovation — the chief of a battalion of amazonian philanthropists who carry all before them; she will drag us before a court-martial," exclaimed he, feigning a sudden alarm as she drew near. "How shall we escape? We shall be caught, tried, convicted, and sentenced in less than five minutes."

"She seems to carry only peaceable weapons," said Mabel with a smile; "and allowing it were otherwise, what have we done to expose ourselves to an attack?"

"We are fair subjects for it," replied Dudley; "yourself especially. Do you not see that she is on the recruiting service?"

The venerable lady of whom Dudley ventured to speak so lightly had just encountered some young girls, who were crossing the hall, and as she stood for a moment conversing with the more sprightly of the two, her hand rested tenderly on the head of the other, a slight, fair-haired creature, who looked up at her aged friend with a countenance full of affectionate respect.

It had seemed to Mabel, as she saw the evident affection the old lady inspired, that nothing would delight her more than to be honored with her friendship; and although Dudley's manner somewhat damped her enthusiasm, she could not resist watching every motion of one whose appearance seemed to rebuke ridicule.

"You see," continued he, "Madam Percival is supreme among her subalterns. Her energies are unparalleled, and her valor invariably places her in the front rank of every quixotic enterprise. She carries a current coin of golden opinions, and her credit is unlimited. It is astonishing what capital can be made now-a-days out of the sufferings of the poorer classes."

Mabel still continued silent, revolving her companions words, and waiting to hear more.

"She wears the same uniform as ever, I see," said Dudley, after a pause — "black satin and brussels lace, and has the same military escort; the gentleman with her is her step-son, General Percival, of the regular army. They have appeared together on parade for these twenty years. It tells vastly well for family concord and unanimity under trying relations; I have heard, however, that there was great difficulty in settling the family estate."

Dudley lowered his voice, as he concluded, for the subject of his remarks was now within a few steps of them, and, as if in confirmation of his fears, had fixed her eye upon him intelligently.

"Shall you venture to meet the charge, and be victimized?" asked Dudley, in an undertone, and at the same time looking about him, as if for a place of refuge.

"I have no fears," answered Mabel, "I am not the object of her notice."

"You will allow me, then," said he, with ready tact, "to hand you some refreshment;" and he darted off in pursuit of a servant, who was passing with a tray of ices, thus avoiding the necessity of the apparently dreaded recognition.

There was such a mingling of humor and satire throughout this conversation, that Mabel could not possibly determine whether a single word of it was spoken in earnest; nor was she convinced that Dudley's anxiety to avoid the lady was otherwise than feigned. Still his words and conduct were not without effect, and her generous, confiding disposition was tinged with unpleasant conjectures. So impressed was she, indeed, with a suspicion of the old lady's eccentricities, that

when the latter paused directly in front of her, she was fully prepared to be addressed, without the ceremony of an introduction, and was consequently somewhat disconcerted when a person seated behind her, and whom she was unconsciously obscuring, laid a hand upon her arm and said, in a gentle voice, "I think that lady is looking for me: will you please move a little to the right?" Mabel instantly stepped aside, and as she did so, brushed against a pair of crutches, which, falling to the floor, revealed the helplessness of the object of her seeming incivility.

As she stooped and restored the crutches to their owner, at the same time apologizing for her unintentional rudeness, the sincere grace of her manner called forth an approving smile from Madam Percival, who, however, took no further notice of her, but entered into conversation with the interesting lame lady, and before Dudley returned with the iced sherbet, accompanied her and Gen. Percival into another room.

Later in the evening Mabel accepted, with her usual good nature, an invitation to join the youthful dancers, who had taken possession of the music room and wanted one more couple to complete their set. Young as she was, they were nearly all her juniors, privileged to be present on this occasion, which partook of the character of a family jubilee, and her boyish partner scarcely equalled her in height. She entered with ready glee, however, into their juvenile gaiety, and won the hearts of the youthful company by her sympathy in their enjoyment. It was an old-fashioned country dance, and Mabel, after faithfully fulfilling her part, reached the bottom laughing and out of breath.

"Your dance is going off gloriously, grandmama!" exclaimed her partner, stepping gaily within the open door of an adjoining room, and addressing Madam Percival, who, while watching the progress of the dance with evident pleasure and interest, was conversing in an animated manner with the gentleman in the long-bodied coat, whom Louise had denominated Father Noah. She smiled and nodded pleasantly in acknowledgment of the boy's congratulations; and Mabel observed

that each successive couple, as they came down the dance, exchanged with her similar tokens of satisfaction.

"This performance was undertaken for grandmother's benefit," said Mabel's partner to her, by way of explanation. It was danced at our hostess's wedding twenty-five years ago. My mother was bridesmaid on the occasion, and grandmother proposed the dance to-night, for the sake of old times." As the boy named his mother he glanced affectionately towards the lady who was presiding at the piano, and Mabel, for the first time, observed that the owner of the crutches had been furnishing the youthful party with music.

What a charming bond of sympathy subsists among these people, thought she; and that remarkable old lady is evidently the connecting link. Can there be hypocrisy beneath such a countenance as hers? Mr. Dudley must have been joking.

This latter conviction was still further strengthened in the cloak room, where she had an opportunity of witnessing the affectionate care which Madam Percival bestowed on her lame friend, declining for herself the attentions to which her years entitled her, and anxious only for the comfort of the invalid. "Offer your arm to your mother, my dear," said she to her grandson, who came to the head of the stairs to escort them to their carriage; and General Percival not being in sight, the venerable lady herself followed, unattended.

"She is a noble woman! I am sure of it," thought Mabel, "but what could Mr. Dudley have meant?"

The ingenuous tribute of praise, and the intruding inquiry which followed it, were alike indicative of Mabel's impressible character. In the former her heart spoke out, in the latter might be detected the haunting influence of an enkindled doubt. Alas, what a shadow may be flung over the fairest things by a single whisper from the brooding demon of distrust!

CHAPTER XIII.

> And who art thou that, in the littleness
> Of thine own selfish purpose, would 'st set bounds
> To the free current of all noble thought
> And generous action, bidding its bright waves
> Be stay'd, and flow no further?
>
> MRS. HEMANS.

It was not strange that Mabel was susceptible to the subtle influence of Dudley's insinuations, for she possessed a quick and active mind, ever open to the teachings of those whose knowledge and experience might entitle them to be the guides of youth. It was, indeed, one of her sweetest, gentlest, and most womanly qualities, which made her thus open to conviction; and great, therefore, was the responsibility incurred by any who presumed to check the genuine impulses of her nature. Not that Mabel was alike destitute of character and principle, ready, like the pliant wax, to be moulded by every fluctuating circumstance. On the contrary, she had a high sense of duty, a stern reverence for virtue, and a noble desire to excel, while certain fixed principles of right served as the outposts to guard the citadel of her conscience.

But duty does not always assert itself with a force which may not be evaded; the standards of virtue and excellence are capable of variation; and the citadel which would repel an open attack, may, insiduously, be undermined. Thus, although Mabel's temper might occasionally be irritated, and her good nature put to the proof by Louise's flagrant and open violations of truth and justice, her character stood in far less danger from this source, than from the plausible, specious, and yet pernicious opinions and principles which Dudley intimated, rather than openly avowed.

The day succeeding the evening above described, was that

on which Mabel held a weekly reception for guests, when, as usual, she was assisted by Louise, who seldom failed to be present, to share the honors and responsibilities which might accrue. There had been an unusual number of guests, but all had left save Dudley. Mr. Vaughan, contrary to his usual custom, was to give a dinner party that evening, and Dudley, who was to make one of the guests, had come early, bringing with him some very rare and valuable prints. These consisted of accurate and beautiful representations of foreign costumes, and Dudley, Mrs. Leroy, and Mabel, were examining them with interest, for the purpose of selecting characters for an approaching fancy ball, when there was a sudden ring of the door bell.

It was too late to expect morning visitors, and too early for the arrival of the strangers who were to constitute the dinner party.

"Who can that be at this hour?" said Mabel, and with girlish curiosity she stepped within the shadow of a bay window, and looked out into the street. "There is no carriage here," said she; "it must be father or Harry."

As she turned from the window, however, she observed Mrs. Leroy carelessly twirling a card round her forefinger, and at the same time giving a hasty message to the footman from whom she had received it.

As the man withdrew into the hall, Louise flung the card upon the table, exclaiming, "Was there ever anything so ridiculous? Father Noah will be coming here next!" and she glanced reproachfully at Mabel.

The latter, slightly coloring, took up the card and read, "Mrs. Abraham Percival."

A ray of manifest pleasure shone on her face, as she ejaculated, in a low voice, and a manner full of expectation, "Oh! that beautiful old lady!"

Louise, with a scornful expression, resumed the study of the plates, while Mabel, apprehensive of some rudeness on her sister's part, walked towards the door to receive her guest, her

countenance evincing some surprise and embarrassment at the unexpected visit.

After waiting a moment, however, she heard the hall door close, and the footman retreat into the back passage. A new light seemed to break in upon her at these significant indications, and she turned upon Louise with the sudden inquiry, "Can she have gone?"

"I suppose so," replied Louise, feigning astonishment at the question; "you surely would not have had her admitted!—Though there is no knowing what you might do," added she, with a contemptuous laugh, "you seem to have such a fancy for antiquities."

"I have," said Mabel, decidedly; "did she ask for me?"

"She certainly did," answered Louise, assuming a somewhat defiant manner, as she observed the color mount into Mabel's cheek, "and I did you good service, and saved you from a most intolerable bore, by sending word that Miss Vaughan was not at home,—for which, I think, you might at least thank me."

"Louise!" exclaimed Mabel, expressing in the simple enunciation of her sister's name all the amazement, regret, and mortification which were roused by this cool declaration—for there was not even the conventional excuse for the falsehood, it being Mabel's reception day.

Louise, who, however much she might be in fault, was always ready with a retort, met Mabel's indignant expression of censure with the retaliating and cutting observation, "Do not be so angry, my dear, Mr. Dudley will think you are a vixen. When father Noah comes," added she, in a mockingly soothing tone, "you shall give your own orders, and have his society all to yourself, for I trust I shall not be present to share the honor," and with her usual light laugh and tripping air, the little lady stepped to the open piano and commenced playing a lively tune, accompanying it with the words, "Oh, no, I shall not be there!"

The righteous indignation which had overspread Mabel's face, and given rise to her sister's accusation of anger, now yielded to an expression of grieved and wounded feeling, and

a tear glistened in her eye, as she said, with a mildness that was truly dignified, "I am not angry, Louise, but I am sorry on every account;" and then, embarassed at the consciousness that Dudley's eye was upon her, she hastily walked to the bay window, and, half hid beneath the shadow of its heavy curtains, watched the retreating figure of Madam Percival, who, in serene unconsciousness of irreverent treatment, was moving leisurely down the street.

Mabel still stood engaged in painful meditation, when she was slightly startled by Dudley's voice close beside her, saying, in a low and sympathetic tone, "I am sorry, too."

"Sorry for what?" asked Mabel, confusedly.

"That you should have been so disturbed. It was very unfair, certainly, — there can be no question who ought to be mistress here."

"Oh, it was not that," said Mabel, quickly; "I beg you not to think me so childish;" and her eye again followed Madam Percival, — "but she is so much older than I, and she came on foot, too, — besides," added she, with simplicity, "I *am* at home."

"Very true," said Dudley; and then ensued a momentary pause; for to condemn Louise was scarcely to satisfy Mabel, and it seemed impossible to give the matter an agreeable turn.

Dudley found means, however, to place it in a new light. "A most unchivalrous mode of escape, without doubt," said he, meditatively; an artifice such as you would have scorned to employ, Miss Mabel; but, while questioning the means, I cannot help congratulating you on the deliverance."

"Do you count it as a fortunate escape?" asked Mabel, looking at him with some surprise. "The visit seems to me a most unmerited, as it was unexpected, honor."

"Unexpected to you," said Dudley, with a meaning smile, and his peculiar and expressive shrug of the shoulders, "but I felt assured you would be too valuable a recruit to be overlooked. I have trembled for you ever since I observed that you had attracted the attention of the gentleman whom Mrs. Leroy styles Father Noah. He is a minister at large, which

means a recruiting sergeant. He has, no doubt, reported you to the commander-in-chief, who would scarcely overlook the auxiliary forces you would be able to bring into the field."

"I!"

"Yes, certainly; have you not time, influence, and money, all at command?"

Mabel's countenance fell, and a shadow passed over her face. "It was not myself, then," thought she, "who was capable of inspiring interest, but my father's position, and the length of his purse."

"Yes, certainly," continued Dudley, in a self-gratulatory tone; "my mind is relieved, I assure you, from many distressing visions which that lady's card conjured up. I had already imagined you in the sober gray uniform of a professor in some foundling educational institute, rapping the heads of unruly members with the knuckles of one hand, and holding up the forefinger of the other, in a monitory manner, while you cried, 'attention!'"

Mabel smiled.

"Or, attired in a long apron of factory cotton, and armed with a huge pair of shears, officiating as assistant directress in a scientific cutting-and-basting academy, for the elevation of indigent needle-women;— or, with a pen behind your ear, and a huge account-book under your arm, your brow wrinkled with the responsible duties of treasurer to the corporation for encouraging the emigration of foreign paupers."

Mabel laughed outright at the ludicrous and, in point of taste, repulsive picture thus represented.

"Come!" exclaimed Louise, rising from the piano, "why don't we go on selecting our characters? I have almost made up my mind to be comedy, if you will only be tragedy, Mabel."

"I have been suggesting tragic characters to your sister," said Dudley, with readiness, "but I do not think any of them exactly meet her approbation. Some fifty years hence," added he, in a side voice, to Mabel, "will surely be time enough to

hide your smiles behind the black hood of a sister of charity. In the mean time, let us seek something more attractive."

And in the indulgence of idle fancies that succeeded, the venerable Christian matron and her noble schemes of usefulness passed from Mabel's mind; or, if remembered, the former was henceforward dimly characterized as one who had desired to divert Mr. Vaughan's wealth to her own quixotic enterprises, and decoy his daughter into sacrificing her youth to painful and, at best, unprofitable labors.

It was not until nearly a month after Madam Percival's visit, that Mabel bethought herself of the necessity of acknowledging the civility; and this she did by merely leaving a card at her address.

Such is the power of ridicule and wounded self-love.

At the commencement of dinner, Louise's want of truth and decorum found another opportunity for display, and here, also, Dudley acted as mediator. Miss Sabiah was being handed in to dinner by a grave, elderly gentleman, who naturally looked upon her as the hostess, when Louise, accompanied by a more youthful escort, brushed past them and took the lead, saying, over her shoulder, as she did so, "by your leave, aunt; father desires me to preside to-day;" and the next moment found her seated at the head of her father's table, gracefully and unblushingly filling the post always heretofore occupied by Miss Sabiah.

It would have been amusing, if it had been one whit less provoking, to witness the audacious effrontery of this usurpation. It was lost upon most of the company, who were strangers in the city; but Mabel, who overheard this second barefaced falsehood, and stood aghast at the presumption of her sister, could scarcely contain her agitation and annoyance; while Harry's eye flashed angrily from the opposite end of the table, and Mr. Vaughan's mild countenance betrayed signs of discomfiture.

As for Miss Sabiah, her nervous distress was such as must have attracted the notice of any one in her neighborhood, had not Dudley, who chanced to sit next to her, covered her confu-

sion, by engaging her for a few minutes in a conversation of which he bore the whole burden himself, thus giving her time to rally her usual stiff and formal self-possession.

This high-bred facility in playing the part of a gentleman, which always imparted to Dudley an extremely obliging air, was never more appreciated by Mabel than in this instance; for her indignation at the conduct of Louise was only equalled by grief at her aunt's wounded feelings. She could not thank him in words, but her grateful smile sufficiently indicated her sense of his considerate kindness. His seat was between her's and her aunt's and as he turned from the latter and met Mabel's approving glance, he remarked, in a low voice, "Miss Vaughan's nerves are sensitive."

"Very," said Mabel, glancing anxiously at Miss Sabiah, who was now attempting monosyllabic replies to her next neighbor on the other side.

"We are all creatures of habit," remarked Dudley, "and I notice that elderly ladies love the little dignities of office. If called upon to resign them, they ought at least to have the satisfaction of seeing the heir apparent installed in their place."

His countenance plainly expressed it as his opinion, that of the two sisters, Mabel was best entitled to the place at the head of her father's table, and he even expressed himself more plainly in the words, "Miss Vaughan is, I presume, a visitor merely, and scarcely endowed with the qualifications for playing the part of a hostess,—but Miss Mabel is unquestionably the presiding genius here, and we naturally look to see her enthroned in the chair of state."

"He is right," thought Mabel; and for the first time she realized her aunt's awkwardness and ignorance of society, felt her own competence to shine in the position Miss Vaughan had hitherto occupied, and half regretted the generous, and, as it now seemed, inconsiderate impulse, which had prompted her, on her first return home, unhesitatingly, to resign it.

Who shall venture to say how far self-love mingled in this regret, and how much of her natural reverence for old associ-

ations and superior years was extinguished in the cold calculations of expediency!

But this was not the only, nor the most vital form in which her sentiments of veneration were this day destined to be assailed. Mabel had a sincere love of her native country, a strong faith in its republican institutions, and its Heaven-designed destiny among nations, and when the conversation of some talented members of the company took a political turn, her interest and attention were at once awakened.

More than one political party were ably represented, but the discussion was conducted in an amicable though earnest spirit, and all were united in the depth of their patriotic zeal for the honor and welfare of their country, and a deep conviction of the influence she was destined to exercise in the establishment of liberal principles throughout the world.

Mabel's face glowed, and her eyes sparkled, as she listened to the hopeful and stirring prophecy of one, who, having survived several administrations, watched the working of our governmental system, and exulted in the growth of truth and justice in the national heart, ventured to predict, that the day would come at last, when, purged from the stain of entailed abuses, she would become a perfect model for future republics.

"You are a politician, I see, Miss Vaughan," said Dudley, who had watched her with an interest equal to that with which she had watched the speaker.

"I!" exclaimed Mabel, turning suddenly towards him and blushing, as she always did at the consciousness of her betrayed enthusiasm, "Oh, no!"

"A female patriot, then?"

"Hardly that," replied Mabel. "I am afraid I have not the heroism of a patriot, but I do hope that prophesied day of glory will come at last, and that I shall live to see it."

"I hope," said Dudley, with a tone that was calculated to chill the ardor of her feelings, "that you will not, on the other hand, see this much-boasted confederacy sink as low in the scale of nations as my fears predict. The elements of disorganization and failure are already at work; it is astonishing to

see the blind confidence with which these self-styled statesmen endeavor to uphold, with high-sounding words, the crumbling edifice of national prosperity;" and, turning to the individual whose eloquence had inspired Mabel with a kindred zeal, he begged a solution of some of those difficult and intricate problems in the future career of the republic which distract the common mind and tax the best abilities of the wisest.

The question called forth a response, which, in its turn, gave rise to a short but spirited debate, conducted ably on both sides, but with especial skill on the part of Dudley, whose opponent was no match for him in clearness of argument and subtle force of reasoning; and not Mabel alone, but older and wiser heads than hers, were compelled to acknowledge the justness of his apprehensions, and almost felt the social fabric totter beneath them, as he enlarged upon the imminent peril which threatened it.

It was neither his taste nor his policy, however, to push the controversy beyond the interchange of a few prominent ideas and suggestions, and he gracefully and ingeniously waived the continuance of a subject ill-suited to the time and place, even suffering his antagonist to enjoy the benefit of the last word, which was to the effect, that no one could foresee how these things would terminate, — that Mr. Dudley's queries were, doubtless, unanswerable — but, as he had said before, he had confidence in the nation at large, and the over-ruling Providence which had thus far sustained it.

"The gentleman has an astonishing confidence in the elements of which this community is composed," said Dudley to Mabel, when conversation around the table had again become general; "he seems to place great reliance too on the Divine partiality. Does he think the American Republic superior in intelligence to those of classic Greece and Rome? or that the former is destined to perennial growth, while the latter were doomed to decay?"

The inquiry was specious, and acted powerfully upon Mabel's mind, for there was no one to suggest the reply, — that in the

Christianity of the nation lay the true safety of its children, and the hope of its future glory.

It was not strange that Dudley should cherish dark and gloomy doubts of a triumph whose germ he totally overlooked. Alas, how much he overlooked in this world, so rich to him in its arts, its sciences, its wealth, its knowledge, and its pride! How poor are all these treasures in comparison with that pearl of price, which he, in his self-reliance, scornfully disdains, and scorning it himself, hesitates not to despoil another of that child-like simplicity and trust, which invest earth with a halo of heavenly brightness, and constitute the choicest gem in her womanly crown!

And what shall he give her in return?

He may ransack the stores of learning, exhaust the mines of knowledge, or drain to their utmost depths the resources of fancy, wit, and imagination — but he can never give her back the holy joy that springs from the love of common things, the cherishing of natural sentiment, the faith in human virtue and the providence of God.

The time is coming when she will need them all. Ah! what shall atone for their fatal loss, when her heart crieth out in its bitter agony and no answering voice replieth?

CHAPTER XIV.

Oh! but ill,
When with rich hopes o'er fraught, the young high heart
Bears its first blow! — it knows not yet the part
Which life will teach — to suffer and be still.

MRS. HEMANS.

A FEW weeks more pass away. The gay world is as gay as ever. Music, laughter, dancing, fashion, and display, still gild the surface of that phase of humanity, which hides its throbbing heart behind the veil of conventional usages, or crushes down its aching sorrows beneath the weight of an assumed gayety. A little while ago, and Mabel was one among the crowd who wore no such veil, and bent beneath no such weight. Her motions were free, her smiles genuine, and her heart light. But the case is altered now; the immunity exists no longer; and Mabel is changed. It is not that the world has withdrawn its favor, though its admiration is, perchance, somewhat tainted with envy. It is not that her health is undermined, though the roses have paled a little in her cheeks; nor is it the effect of satiety, for the new element, which a superior mind has had power to infuse into her daily life, has lost nothing of its charm. Yet the once buoyant, happy, careless Mabel, is suddenly and strangely changed.

The dull-eyed world notes it not; even affection is blinded to the fact, and scarcely does her own heart acknowledge its painful but unutterable burden.

Still its influence penetrates every spring of action, and modifies every thought; for, hid as it might be from others, and struggled with as it might be by herself, Mabel, the hitherto light-hearted Mabel, has something on her mind.

Whatever it may be, it is something of a saddening nature; for the spirits which were wont to be spontaneous are now forced and fitful; it is something alarming, if one may judge from the nervous starts and occasional tremblings which are significant of anxiety and dread; it is something secret, for she tells no one, maintains an assumed composure herself, and scans the faces of others with eager scrutiny.

Her altered habits, moreover, betray a corresponding change in her feelings, motives, and designs. She no longer approaches the breakfast-room carolling a gay song, or trips with a light step to her aunt's door, and bids her a lighter good morning,—but pauses within her own room, listens for the footsteps of the rest of the household assembling for the morning meal, and when she makes her own appearance, glances around the table with a troubled air and an inquiring eye. And when she returns at night from those gay scenes, into which she plunges with more eagerness than ever, she seems quite forgetful of the rest which youthful weariness is wont to crave, and, dismissing her maid, paces her room with unequal steps, looks out of her window at the night, or, noiselessly turning the door-lock, moves through the house like a ghost, listening at cracks and peeping through key holes; then, startled by some slight noise, retreats hastily within her own room, perhaps brushes away a tear, and retires for the night with a lamp still burning.

In society, also, many and frequent are the indications which, though unmarked by others, betray to one observant eye, at least, the secret fear which is ever present to her thoughts. The quick flush upon the countenance, the rapid and excited conversations upon subjects of trifling interest, the nervous start on being suddenly addressed, and an occasional absence of mind — all bear witness to the fact, which it is now the chief anxiety of her life to conceal.

Yes, even her pathway, sunny as it seemed, stretches across those dreary wastes which humanity is doomed to tread. She, like the rest, has taken up her burden, and must bear it as best she may. It came upon her suddenly. A premonitory shadow, indeed — an undefined dread — had once or twice taken posses-

sion of her mind; but the blow aimed by cruel hands finally struck home without preface or warning.

It happened thus. She was sitting for her portrait to the very artist who had been so earnest to obtain the opportunity, and who, with Dudley's recommendation in his favor, met Mr. Vaughan's ready encouragement.

It was the morning after the fancy ball, already alluded to as in course of preparation. The festivities having been prolonged until a late hour, it was with some reluctance that Mabel made the effort to keep her appointment with the artist; but his time was valuable, and she was unwilling to disappoint him. Miss Sabiah usually accompanied her on these occasions, but as the venerable years and character of the portrait painter rendered her presence superfluous, and the coachman had taken his horses to be shod that morning, Mabel proceeded alone and on foot to the studio, requesting her aunt to send the carriage to meet her at an appointed hour.

Mr. Geraldi, whose conversational gifts rivalled those of the pencil, and who seldom failed to relieve the monotony of these sittings by his agreeable discourse, had this morning enlarged with more than ordinary enthusiasm upon topics connected with his profession, and either accidentally or with conscious tact, had, by a warm eulogium upon his friend Dudley's knowledge and taste, called up in Mabel's face that expression of animation and interest which he was most anxious to transfer to his canvas. He had reached a critical point in his labors, and his countenance consequently manifested no little annoyance, when the outer door of his studio was unceremoniously thrown open, and a party of fashionable young ladies entered, having come thither, out of idle curiosity, to inspect some portraits which were on exhibition.

A wide screen, which stretched the whole length of the apartment, concealed Mr. Geraldi and Mabel from the observation of the visitors, but their loud voices and extravagant mirth were scarcely less embarrassing to the artist than their actual presence would have been; more especially as, however he might profess to despise the criticism of the uninitiated, he

could not be wholly insensible to the unqualified comments which they bestowed upon his works.

"Do see," cried one, "that is Mrs. Leonard!" "Looks about as much like her as it does like me," cried a second. "I hope she has paid him well for making a beauty of her," again exclaimed the first speaker; while a third, exposing to view an unfinished portrait which was turned towards the wall, pronounced it a genuine likeness of Miss Oldbelle, minus her rouge and hair-dye.

Mr. Geraldi smiled. Mabel blushed, recognizing as she did the voices of some of her friends, and anxiously anticipating some more cutting sarcasm.

Well might she tremble—but not for the artist; the poisonous shafts of these idle tongues were destined to take a nearer, closer aim, and pierce her own heart.

"Where's Mabel Vaughan?" cried Victoria Vannecker. "Geraldi is painting her; that's the only picture I care about seeing."

"You feel a sisterly interest, Vic!" exclaimed another voice. "No wonder!" And then followed many foolish and coarse jokes, implying the near relations likely to exist between Miss Vannecker and the Vaughan family.

Mabel's lips, as she listened, curled with a slight expression of scorn at these unwelcome and preposterous projects of alliance.

"I will do the Hammerlys the credit of saying," cried the eldest and loudest-spoken of Victoria's companions, "that there has been nothing this winter that has gone off half as well as that ball last night. The whole thing was managed splendidly, and that last dance was so exciting—it almost takes me off my feet to think of it!" and she concluded by humming a few notes of the most popular waltz of the season.

"They say there was no end to the champagne that was drank," said Victoria.

"I should think so," said another and somewhat gentler voice; "did you see Mr. Van Rosberg and that young creole

that wore a Spanish dress? I was afraid they would really get to fighting. I am sure they were both excited with wine."

"Oh, that is nothing," cried the loud-voiced lady. "I know from good authority, that two or three of our set didn't go home until daylight, and then not without help. Your Knight of Malta, Vic, had his share of the champagne, if any body did."

Miss Vannecker laughed.

"What were you doing in the supper-room just before the last dance? drinking healths?"

"Oh, Robin Hood gave the funniest toast," said Victoria; "I wish I could remember it—it was something about a horn; and Little John—that was Fred Earle, you know—he responded; and my Maltese Knight made a little bit of a speech—all to ourselves, you know, up in that corner of the room; but oh, it was so funny! Fan and I laughed so! I declare, Fan—Fan Broadhead, the fairy queen—was so diverted, that she forgot to take care of her gauze wings, and that great, stout Mrs. Makeway brushed against her and crushed one of them, so that it looked ridiculously. Fan was dreadfully provoked! It served her right, though, for she never would have dreamed of taking that part if she had not known that I thought of it for myself. How mad she was when the Malta Knight said something about its proving that she was a false fairy. That was just as we went off to dance," added Victoria, with an affected and self-satisfied air, "and I don't know how she managed to repair the mischief."

"Your devoted knight was very light, both of head and heels, at that time in the evening," said her friend. "What with my partner and yours, Vic, the dance had a right to be lively. They do say, though," and here she lowered her voice sufficiently to impart added meaning to her words—"the Hammerlys, and some others who have a right to know, do say, that it is not the first time that the Knight of Malta has needed the services of his father's footman. But, lah! they say so of half the young men!"

"To be sure," said Victoria, as the party, who had long

ceased their inspection of the pictures, prepared to take leave, and the door closed behind them with these words from the frivolous lips of one of their number—

"Poh! What is champagne made for if not to drink?"

Mr. Geraldi, who with his head bent over his palette had been mixing a few colors, while he impatiently awaited the departure of the talkative group of visitors, now looked up at Mabel, with the view of resuming his labors at the easel, but could scarcely believe that he saw before him the same face which he had been studying a few moments before. The mobile features had become rigid, the lips compressed, the complexion almost colorless; while the expression of animated intelligence, which he had been so anxious to retain, had wholly vanished, giving place to that vacant and absent air which often takes possession of the countenance when the mind is engaged in painful introspection.

Thought was almost suspended in Mabel, but memory and imagination had called up in vivid colors a long array of living facts, upon which her mental gaze was riveted. She had experienced strange doubts and questionings before. It was all explained now. The coldness between Dudley and Harry — the latter's exaggerated attentions to Miss Vannecker — his avoidance of herself — her solitary return home the previous night — and the unusual noise upon the stairs which had disturbed her slumbers at daybreak — these idle tattlers had accounted for it all — for Harry was the Knight of Malta.

Not until the loud banging of the street door and the sudden silence which succeeded, recalled her to herself, did she realize the necessity for self-control. As she looked up and found Mr. Geraldi's eyes fixed upon her, a sudden flush overspread her cheeks and brow, and she rose quickly from her chair, as if deprecating any further analysis of her face and, possibly, of her emotions.

"You are fatigued, my dear young lady. I have kept you too long!" said the kind old artist, who had heard but a portion of the conversation that had just transpired in his studio,

and who had recognized nothing in it which could have power to agitate her.

"Yes," said Mabel, in a broken voice, and scarcely knowing what she said, "I will go now;" and rising, she mechanically resumed her cloak and bonnet, and walked to the door, forgetting, until she had nearly left the room, her customary salutation and farewell, which were at length performed with but little of her wonted grace.

She had gained the sidewalk before she even thought of the carriage, but then perceiving that it had not arrived, she walked slowly up the street, and turning, walked back for a little distance, — and this she did, again and again, unconscious of observation, and thankful only to be in the fresh air and alone.

"Miss Mabel!" called Donald, as she was unconsciously passing the carriage, which had at length reached the artist's door. He was obliged to follow his young mistress and repeat the call, before he could arrest her attention.

"O, Donald! is that you?" she exclaimed, in sudden surprise; and then, without any explanation of her singular preoccupation, she turned, hastened to the carriage, and springing in, threw herself upon the back seat with evident relief, and told him to drive on.

"Where?" asked he, and receiving no answer, repeated the question.

"Home," cried she, at length, in answer to his inquiries, and for the first time astonishing him by the irritability of her tone of voice.

Fortunately it was a quiet street, and there was no one but Donald to feel or express any astonishment at her movements.

They had gone but a few steps, when she suddenly pulled the check-string. "Drive to Mrs. Leroy's!" exclaimed she, a little imperatively, as if the man had wilfully misunderstood her first direction.

Poor girl! she scarcely knew what she said or did. Louise was at home, and Mabel found her attired in a rich dressing-gown, and lying on a sofa, too much fatigued with the dissipation of the previous evening to attempt any exertion.

Not till she was seated opposite to her sister, and a pause succeeded the usual interchange of civilities, did Mabel ask herself for what purpose she had come. Certainly not to betray to Mrs. Leroy the subject which was uppermost in her thoughts. Perhaps, though she could not herself be sure, it was to learn whether Louise was yet conscious of the fatal secret, which was no secret; and if so, to discover the nature of her sentiments in relation to the melancholy fact.

"Been at Geraldi's ever since ten o'clock?" was the exclamation with which Mrs. Leroy broke the momentary silence. "O, Mabel," continued she, languidly, and settling herself more comfortably on her pillows, "how strong you are; why, I hardly felt able to go to the breakfast-table, after the fatigue of last night."

"You danced more than I did," said Mabel with an absent tone, and the half-timid, half-searching glance at her sister, which she had worn from her first entrance.

"Yes, very true," responded Louise, with the flattered air of a youthful belle, "somehow I never can get excused. How do you manage, Mabel? However," continued she, without waiting for a reply, "you are not so passionately fond of it as I am; I was brought up to it. I danced the cracovienne with castanets, when I was only four years old, for the entertainment of mamma's visitors. There was a Count in the room one evening, — I can't think of his name, but I remember perfectly what he said to me about my dancing."

Once launched upon this topic, Louise did not pause until she had detailed, for Mabel's benefit, the successive tributes of flattery which had poisoned the ear, first of the child, and then of the woman, up to the present period; and Mabel, to whom these petty parades of vanity were nothing new, breathed more freely as she listened. She could never be thinking of herself, and of such trifles, if she knew what I know, thought Mabel; and she felt a sense of relief in the idea that there was one of the family, at least, who was ignorant of Harry's disgrace.

At length, after Louise had roamed from one frivolous topic to another, for the space of half an hour, failing amid her own

volubility to take note of Mabel's unusual silence and constraint, the latter rose to go.

"Do hand me that cologne, Mabel," said her sister; and receiving the bottle from Mabel's hand, she poured some of its contents on her handkerchief, and applied it to her forehead. "I believe I have got a headache to-day," drawled she, "I feel very dull and stupid, at any rate; I suppose it's the champagne I drank last night. Close the shutters, will you, Mabel? if Lydia will only keep those children out, I may get a nap. Was Harry up to breakfast this morning?" added she, laughing.

Mabel's hand trembled, as with her back to Louise, she attempted to close the shutters, and her voice betrayed no slight agitation, as she answered, "Why?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Louise, "only I fancy he returned rather late, and had a pretty heavy dose to sleep off."

Mabel made no answer, except by rattling the latch of the shutter, which she tried in vain to fasten.

"It was two o'clock when we came away," continued Louise, "and Mr. Leroy says that some of the young men in the hotel did not come home until three or four hours later. I will venture to say, Harry was one of the last to leave, for nobody seemed to enjoy it more than he did. I never saw him in such spirits in his life — thanks to the supper, I think, rather than Vic Vannecker's wit, though Vic would not thank me for saying so," added she, in a somewhat indifferent tone.

Mabel turned slowly round, lifted her long lashes, and fixed her eyes full and wonderingly upon her sister's face. Louise met this glance of deep concern and reproach with her usual light and scornful laugh.

"Don't look so shocked," exclaimed she at length, a little irritated by Mabel's silence, which was far more expressive than any words of which she could have made use; "you are just like Mr. Leroy. He talks about Harry's having got into a bad set, and all that nonsense. I am sure his acquaintances are the first young men about town. For my part, I like to see gentlemen have a little life and spirit about them; I can't

bear these spoonies who are always measuring their conduct; afraid of losing caste among the saints; they do n't turn out a bit better in the end. But, la, Mabel, how solemn you look," added Louise, almost angrily. "You 'd make an anchorite of Harry, I dare say, and advise me to become a nun, and go out into the wilderness, next month, with Mr. Leroy, as he proposed I should do this morning. My motto is, to enjoy as much as one can, and take life easy." And once more composing herself upon her couch, she commenced putting her motto into practice by closing her eyes for a nap.

Mabel was not slow to avail herself of the hint which this action afforded, and now hastening from the house, gave the coachman the unhesitating order to drive home.

In that one long, silent look which she had fastened upon her sister's face, she had pierced, as it were, to the depths of that shallow and worldly nature,—she had measured the wide difference between her own vehement heart-throbs, and the feeble pulsations of feeling in Louise, and had learned the sad truth, that in the deep experiences of life she must seek in vain, in this direction, for a sister's counsel and sympathy.

To whom, then, shall she look for comfort in this hour of bitterness? Not to her father, who, she trusts, may long be left in ignorance of his son's misconduct; not to her aunt, who would inveigh against it with a severity of which Mabel could not bear to think; and of higher and heavenly aid, though she was far from denying its power, she had not yet learned to avail herself. So, for the first time in her life, as she sought her solitary room, she felt herself truly alone,—alone with an aching sorrow.

With what crushing force did it weigh down and paralyze her heart! The world might excuse the folly at which it laughed so lightly, the frivolous might defend, and the weak applaud, but Mabel could only tremble and weep.

She looked not to the end, she measured not the fearful consequences that might ensue in the future; her feelings had received too severe a shock to admit of any other consciousness, than that of a deep and irreparable calamity.

Harry, her noble brother, a laughing stock and a by-word!—his manly figure and handsome face a mark for the finger of scorn, his intellectual nature lowered to the level of a brute! It was too much; and the necessity for self-control being past, she threw herself on her bed, and gave way to a paroxysm of grief.

Who shall tell the agony of the mental conflict that she experienced? It is sufficient that she rose from that suffering crisis a new and altered being. The iron hand was upon her which moulds the child into the woman, and she went her way, shrinking beneath its cruel touch. Henceforth, her inner and outer world were no longer in harmony. The drama of her life was double, and she had two parts to play.

CHAPTER XV.

Oh, that men should put an enemy in
Their mouths, to steal away their brains! that we
Should, with joy, pleasure, revel and applause,
Transform ourselves to beasts. SHAKSPEARE.

THERE is a species of brutish self-indulgence which takes possession of the poor, the hard-working and the untaught nature. It revels in the low, degrading, and under-ground haunts of vice. It walks both by night and day, striding before the eyes of men in all its unglossed deformity, telling of starvation and rags, of wayside gutters and unmarked graves. It excites the disgust of the refined worldling, and the efforts of the brave philanthropist.

There is another, and a like species of consuming demon, which treads the high places of the earth, its ugliness clothed in the garments of pride, and its depravity hid beneath the veil of luxury. Wealth ministers to its grasping influence, and oftentimes, youthful beauty and woman's smile foster the devouring flame. Not until its fell work is well-nigh done, does the world take note of the destruction which lies in its path; but the record of its fearful march is written on many a bowed head and broken heart, while secret tears and midnight watchings, and the unuttered groans of disappointed hope, sap the very life-springs of a mourning household.

The friend of humanity spares no effort to baffle the brutish wayside enemy which drags the once honest and industrious laborer down to idleness, poverty, and ruin. Shall no voice, then, be lifted up to warn, threaten, and perchance to save, the victim of that far more insidious and equally ruinous foe, which walks hand in hand with pleasure, is sanctioned by fashion and encouraged by wealth, but which leaves behind it,

when its easy victory is won, a blighted intellect, a shattered frame, and all the conscious degradation of an abused and fallen nature?

Oh, that the silent and secret agony which has wrung so many an innocent heart could find for itself an utterance! that the voiceless and anguished groan of the repentant spirit could give vent to its warning cry! Then might the youth just launched on a career of dissipation, vice and folly, be startled betimes by the fearful knell of disappointed hope, which rings out from the shoals and quicksands that are scattered amid the sea of pleasure.

But, alas! the ill-fated victim who learns his first lessons in self-indulgence within the charmed ring of fashionable conviviality, and plunges thence into the deeper haunts of iniquity and vice, comes not back to shake the skeleton finger at those who yet linger on the threshold. Lost to self-respect, and banished from the courts which lured him on to ruin, he sinks into disgraceful oblivion, while the hearts that his misconduct has broken, betray him not with a cry.

It was no sudden bound which had brought Harry to the verge of this dark gulf. Freedom from parental restraint, unlimited supplies of money, and a naturally gay and adventurous disposition, had early exposed him to the temptations which beset boyhood and youth. The love of mischief that resulted in his banishment from West Point, had been succeeded by a course of foolish extravagance, which was, however, in some degree checked by the simple mode of life that prevailed in the German university which he next attended, and the interest in literary and scientific pursuits which was there awakened. The two following years of travel served to make him well acquainted with men and manners; and amid the various trials and tests to which the youth was subjected, it must be acknowledged that he sometimes overleaped the bounds of prudence and sobriety. Fortunately the excitement of journeying, and the generous aspirations which it awakened, furnished a vent to the ardor and impetuosity of his disposition, and tempered the exposures which threatened him on every hand; still his

character became gradually marked by a certain recklessness and self-indulgence which boded ill for the future.

But it was not until his return to his native city that he gave himself up to a life of pleasure, and relinquished nobler pursuits for the petty gratifications of the day and hour. Idleness, however, the difficulty in choosing a profession, and the satiety of his present mode of life, all combined to undermine his strength of manly purpose; while his convivial traits and command of money, caused his society to be appreciated, and his presence sought by those who were alike skilled in administering flattery and in contaminating the heart.

The point where a man loses his self-respect, usually precedes that in which he loses the respect of others.

Mabel became conscious that a barrier had arisen between herself and her brother, before she suspected its cause.

Perhaps, had she been less engaged with a new sentiment, she would have felt more keenly the gradual withdrawal of Harry's confidence, and would have probed more deeply the secret of his seemingly diminished affection; at least, she would have asked herself why it was that their pleasures, interests, and tastes, which had hitherto lain in the same direction, had ceased to be in harmony.

As it was, the conviction that Harry was in some degree supplanted in her own heart, forbade her to question too closely any want of devotion on his part; and if she occasionally felt wounded at his reposing less trust in her than formerly, she doubted her right to complain of a reserve which she knew to be in some degree mutual.

But if the consciousness of his own unworthiness caused Harry to dread his sister's scrutiny, the barrier between them was doubled now that she had come to share this knowledge. He no longer had occasion to avoid the eye which nervously shrunk from encountering his, or dread any expression of those suspicions on her part which, though they were ever on the alert, she sought only to hide from his observation. And yet, while Mabel had no anxiety so great as to conceal from him her participation in his fatal secret, her very anxiety betrayed

her; and he became instinctively conscious that his innocent sister was suffering for his misdeeds.

The consequence was, a painful and daily increasing estrangement; not the estrangement which springs from harsh looks, angry words, and mutual accusations; there were none of these. Scarcely less bitter to Mabel's heart, however, were the averted or stealthy glance, the unexplained absence, the constrained silence, or the ill-timed hilarity, which proclaimed a mind ill at ease.

How far Mr. Vaughan and his sister shared her solicitude, it was difficult to determine. The former, in spite of his daily increasing abstraction of mind, now and then cast on his son a look of deep concern and scrutiny; and the puzzled air with which Sabiah was wont to regard her nephew, occasionally gave place to a sharp glance of reproof, as she observed his growing indifference to the happiness and convenience of the whole household. No further utterance, however, was given to their thoughts, nor was there as yet any positive evidence that the indications of misconduct in Harry had not wholly escaped their observation. Still, it could not be denied that an air of constraint had gradually crept over the family, while whatever might be the apparent subject of interest, an under current of feeling evidently pervaded their little circle.

To shun the society of her aunt and father became at length scarcely less an object with Mabel, than to avoid encountering the eye of Harry. She never paused to ask herself whether it was wise or right to shrink from meeting, face to face, the calamity which she saw no way to avert; but blindly following the instinct of nature, she sought to flee from the harrowing dread which, nevertheless, pursued her like a shadow.

Thus she now rushed more recklessly than ever into that life of excitement and fashion which, in reality, had lost for her the charm that it once possessed, seeking in the gay and heartless whirl of society to drown the bitter fears and forebodings which pressed painfully upon her in her home.

It must be confessed, too, that her first agony of regret at Harry's disgrace had been succeeded by a less disinterested

emotion, as she thought of the mortification it would entail upon herself; and, shrinking from the companionship of her brother, she almost unconsciously gave the preference to those scenes of gaiety from which he would be sure to absent himself.

The time had been when Mabel would have repelled every pleasure or honor which Harry might not share, and would have scorned to possess any interest distinct and separate from his. The school-girl of six months ago would boldly have declared, that in the face of all the world she and her brother would fall or rise together. But the Mabel of to-day, be it remembered, was not the simple-hearted pupil of Mrs. Herbert. She had recently been trained in another school, and had unconsciously imbibed other maxims. It was not the influence of fashionable life; for that, though it might engross her time with frivolous pursuits, had failed to corrupt the generous emotions of her heart. It was the deeper, subtler influence of one who, knowing no disinterested sentiments, and believing the rest of the world as false and hollow as himself, had insidiously contaminated her innocent and affectionate nature with that refined species of selfishness which shrinks from contact with the rough edges of this world's experience, and wards off with shrinking dread the realizing sense of aught that might interfere with its luxurious repose.

Thus striving, as she did, to free herself from the consequences of Harry's misconduct, the gulf between the brother and sister was widening day by day; and Mabel, if not aiding in the downfall of the misguided youth, was lending no hand to rescue him from ruin.

Nor did she escape the mortification which she was so anxious to evade. Frequently did her cheek blanch, and the light word tremble on her lip, as she suddenly became conscious of Harry's unexpected presence on an occasion when she had least apprehended his approach. Sometimes he would enter the assembly-room at a late hour, his face flushed with wine, and his voice elevated a pitch above its usual tone; sometimes she would meet him on her drives, careering

through one of the avenues in an open gig, drawn by a steed noted on the race-course; and more than once he had attracted attention to her opera-box, by the boisterous conversation and merriment with which he had disturbed the rest of the audience.

In the eyes of some of Mabel's fashionable companions these might be evidences of spirit; but — to her credit be it said — her good sense, no less than her sensitive affection, were keenly alive to the disgrace and censure which they merited.

Such experiences, and the apprehension of them, were sufficient to cloud her joyousness. But this was not all. Other evils soon followed in their train. Mabel's excitable, and apparently inconsistent demeanor, exposed her to misconstruction, and that, too, in a quarter where she was most anxious that her conduct should be favorably interpreted. In the early stages of her acquaintance with Dudley, when he merely sought a mental stimulus in the satisfaction of awakening her genius and developing her intellectual nature, he had felt no disposition to put a check upon her lighter enjoyments, and had been coolly indifferent to competition. But, in proportion as he realized the power he had gained over her mind and heart, did he become jealous of any interference, real or imaginary. He made no open profession of that deeper interest with which she had inspired him — an interest which had awakened in his sophisticated soul something like a genuine emotion. He even refused to acknowledge to himself the force of the feelings by which he was actuated. Their manifestation, however, took precisely the form which might have been anticipated from one of his distrustful character; and often did Mabel find herself controlled by a jealous tyranny which she could not understand, or grieved by a displeasure for which she could not account. It was easy, however, to submit to a tyranny which usually took the form of watchful devotion, and to allay a displeasure which was seldom more than momentary; and until the period when Mabel's mind

became harassed by contending emotions, no serious cause of alienation had arisen between herself and Dudley.

But experience now proved that, although there was no one who could so effectually win her from the painful thoughts by which she was oppressed, Dudley was not her most efficient aid in moments of sudden agitation. Her only refuge, then, was in assumed gaiety; and it often happened that there was an individual in her vicinity who possessed at once the ability and the will to second her efforts at animation, and afford her the most easy and obvious means of concealing and overcoming her mortification and chagrin. This was a young man of lively temperament, unfailing spirits, and proverbial good nature, who was ever ready to join in a playful war of words, laugh at a pleasant joke, or take the lead in those popular and fashionable dances in which he excelled. These available qualities were always at Mabel's disposal, for Mr. Marston was one of a numerous throng who perseveringly sought to render themselves acceptable to the belle of the season.

Anxious only to maintain her composure, at any cost, Mabel did not realize the undue encouragement she was bestowing on her highly flattered admirer, or the severity with which Dudley inwardly commented upon her coquetry and frivolity.

One evening, however, when, being more than usually oppressed by anxiety, she had sought to divert her feelings and ward off the observation of others, by accepting Mr. Marston's invitation to join in a rapid and giddy dance, she was startled, on coming to a pause, by perceiving Dudley standing directly opposite to her, with an expression of unmistakable scorn upon his features, while Harry was at the same moment rendering himself conspicuous, by bestowing upon Miss Vannecker, in an audible tone, a series of absurd compliments, which he would never have uttered in his sober senses.

Half fainting from a conflict of painful emotions, she sank upon a chair, and her agitation reached its height when Dudley crossed the room, and addressed her in the sarcastic tone which he so well knew how to assume: "Miss Vaughan,"

said he, "I am glad to see you in such spirits to-night; the recollection of your animated enjoyment of this scene will cheer me during my absence from the city." And with a frigid bow he left the room.

He despises me, thought Mabel, for my frivolity and seeming indifference to what every one must perceive. But, too proud to bend beneath the weight of his displeasure, she returned his salutation with haughty coldness, and accepted Mr. Marston's invitation to take another turn in the dance.

Bitter, almost heart-breaking, were Mabel's reflections that night. For the first time, she began to doubt the wisdom, the propriety even, of the course she had thought proper to adopt, in order to veil her actual sufferings from the eye of the world. Even Dudley, thought she, believes me heartless; for attributing to him a worthier motive than that by which he was really actuated, she never doubted that it was his warm friendship for Harry which caused him to be shocked at her levity; nor dreamed that it was an overwrought and involuntary jealousy on his own account, which prompted his sarcastic comment upon her apparent enjoyment of Mr. Marston's society.

And thus mistaking, as she did, the cause of his disapprobation, nothing could exceed her regret at having given offence to the friend who, valued as he had long been, was never so deeply prized as in this her time of painful and humiliating sorrow. His desertion of her at this crisis seemed more than she could bear.

Disappointed in her brother, blamed and forsaken by him whose voice had hitherto been a charm against utter despondency, and dreading the watchful eyes of her father and aunt, she dared not fathom her own unhappiness; but, continuing her customary round of engagements, performed her part with automaton accuracy, masking her face in smiles, and crushing down the emotions to which she dared not give way.

CHAPTER XVI.

Humble love,
And not proud science, keeps the door of Heaven;
Love finds admission where proud science fails.

YOUNG.

DURING the fortnight that Dudley continued absent from the city, which was also the limit of his estrangement from Mabel, the only companionship from which she obtained any relief was that of her sister's children. Her efforts to win the affections of the boys had not been without success; and each in his way gave evidence of a strength of attachment to their young aunt, which she, in her turn, reciprocated with all the warmth of a loving heart. The shout of joy with which Murray hailed her presence, was only equalled by the glow of unspoken pleasure which overspread the face of Alick, and their mutual admiration of their aunt Mabel was the one point on which they never disagreed. Murray's restlessness subsided into happy, childish enjoyment, when he was permitted to climb her knee at the twilight hour, and prattle to her of the events of the day; and nothing made him so supremely happy, as to fall asleep at night with his hand locked fast in hers. Often, while he was visiting at his grandfather's, had Mabel loitered from the fashionable dinner party to listen to the little nothings which he was so eager to impart; and more than once her rich evening dress had swept the carpet while she knelt beside his couch and soothed his infant slumbers. Both nature and habit had made Alick independent of caresses; but the gratified look with which he glanced up from his book the first time she questioned him upon the subject of his reading, had taught her the way to his heart, and the boy never again had reason to complain that no one was interested in his pleasure and improvement.

She had her reward. Childish love is a refreshing balm to the soul; and nothing so quieted her restless spirit as to feel around her the pressure of Murray's little arms, and observe the sturdy manliness with which Alick, on all occasions, appointed himself her attendant and champion.

She had nothing to dread, moreover, in her intercourse with the children. They would neither suspect her uneasiness, nor seek to pry into its source, and experiencing a sense of security in their presence, Mabel availed herself of their society on every possible occasion.

One Sunday they accompanied her home from church after the morning service, and, the early dinner being concluded, followed her, with their pockets full of nuts, into the little apartment adjoining the drawing-room, which she could never enter now without feelings of inexpressible sadness. The boys seated themselves in the window and commenced eating their nuts, while Mabel wandered listlessly about the room, reading, in its abundant decorations, the evidences of Harry's affection, and wondering where he might be spending the Sabbath, for she had not seen him since morning.

She paused in front of her richly inlaid writing-desk, and, lifting the lid, took up a little heap of letters recently received from her former teacher and schoolmates. They were in reply to some she had written a few weeks ago in all the extravagance of youthful spirits, and their tone grated strangely on her present feelings. The dear girls congratulated and envied her, and her beloved friend, Mrs. Herbert, believing her to be happy, wrote only a brief message of affection, sympathizing in the pleasures of her lot, and gently cautioning her not to be too confident of their continuance. Alas! the caution came too late.

She closed the desk, and taking a book threw herself upon the sofa and tried to read; but her mind wandered from the page, and, after indulging a long fit of gloomy meditation, she rose and walked to the window, where the children were watching the numerous passers by. The day, though cold, was clear

and bright, and the family groups that moved through the street formed a pleasant picture.

"Should you like to take a walk?" asked she, moved by a sudden impulse to run away from her thoughts.

The proposition was hailed with acclamations of delight. The boys ran for their coats and hats, while Mabel prepared for the excursion with an air of indifference strangely at variance with her once elastic movements. They had proceeded some distance down one of the avenues, without any special destination in view, when Alick suddenly exclaimed, "O Aunt Mabel, why can't we go and see Rosy?"

"We can," said Mabel, "if it will not be too long a walk for Murray."

Murray protested against the possibility of his being fatigued, and they at once took the direction toward Mrs. Hope's humble dwelling. The quarter in which she lived was poor, but respectable and orderly, and they reached the house without adventure, though not without attracting the attention of the neighborhood, who seldom had an opportunity to witness the dress and bearing of the wealthier classes. They found the windows of the little shop closed, with wooden shutters; and the door, too, was fastened; so that Mabel's repeated knocks were unanswered. Disappointed at having come so far to no purpose, and fearful that some misfortune had befallen the family, she looked about her to find, if possible, some other mode of entrance — and, at length, proceeding to the end of the building, discovered a low, dark alley, which appeared to lead to the rear of the dilapidated tenement.

She felt some hesitation in entering this unexplored passage-way, but it was no part of her character to be turned from a worthy purpose by the indulgence of idle fears, and bidding the children follow her closely, she penetrated to the extremity of the alley, and found herself in a narrow yard, enclosed by mouldy walls of brick, encumbered with rubbish, but extending, as she had conjectured, across the rear of the entire building. Several doors opened upon this common court-yard, and she was at a loss to distinguish that of Mrs. Hope, when the widow

herself emerged from one of them with a pail in her hand, and was proceeding in the direction of the pump that stood against the wall; but seeing and recognizing Mabel, she gave a quick start of surprise, and, setting down her pail, came to meet her, with an air of mingled pleasure and embarrassment.

The latter feeling partially subsided, as Mabel made haste to apologize for her seemingly clandestine entrance, and inquired with cordial interest concerning Mrs. Hope's welfare, and that of Rose.

"Rose is pretty well, just now, for her," said the widow. "She'll be right glad to see you, Miss Vaughan. She's got her little Sunday-school in the back room this afternoon, and I suppose it was their singing that drowned your knock; they've got considerable voice, little tots as they are. They are most through now; walk in, Miss Vaughan, it's a sort of a pretty sight. You wont disturb them," added she, observing that Mabel hesitated—and, stepping within the woodshed at the rear of her own contracted tenement, she threw open the door of the kitchen, and motioned to Mabel to advance as far as the threshold.

She did so without attracting observation, and, holding up her finger, she enforced silence upon the boys, who also pressed forward and peeped in.

Rose was seated in her little arm-chair in the centre of the room, and around her were grouped some half dozen children, none of whom could have been more than seven or eight years of age. Their eyes were fixed upon Rose's face, while she repeated, slowly and distinctly, the last verse of the hymn they were singing. It ran thus:

Bright in that happy land
Beams every eye;
Fed by the Father's hand,
Love cannot die;
Oh! we shall happy be,
When, from sin and sorrow free,
Lord, we shall reign with thee,
Blest, blest, for aye.

As Rose spoke the last word, the children commenced singing. It was sweet and touching to hear their childish voices uniting in the simple melody which Rose had taught them. But it was sweeter and more touching still to see them, when the hymn was finished, assume a kneeling posture, and repeat after her the words of the little closing prayer with which they were accustomed to separate.

The tears started to Mabel's eyes, and with instinctive deference to the solemnity of the service, she retreated at its conclusion, and, drawing Alick and Murray back into the outer shed, closed the door noiselessly, that the little company might not be conscious of intrusion.

"They're mostly German children," said Mrs. Hope to Mabel, in explanation; "this is a German neighborhood, rather; they can't get much education in the schools for want of knowing the language. Rosy first taught them English, and then how to read and say their prayers; singing comes natural to 'em That makes fifteen she's taught, and some of 'em are bigger than she is, poor child. It aint much," added the mother with a meditative air, "but then it's better than nothing, to be sure; and it makes Rose happy."

"Better than nothing!" exclaimed Mabel earnestly, "yes, indeed, it is everything."

And Mabel felt what she said. In that moment of excited feelings, the wealth, the learning, and the pride of this world sank into nothingness, in comparison with the pure and childlike faith which takes hold on eternal life.

Alick and Murray were no less impressed than Mabel, as was evident from their awe-struck silence and inquiring faces; there was no opportunity, however, for any further expression of interest, for a confused murmur within the room was followed by the sudden exit of the little band of children, who, after casting curious and lingering glances at Mabel and her nephews, dispersed in different directions — while Mrs. Hope ushered the freshly arrived visitors into her neat though humble kitchen.

Rose, somewhat exhausted with her labors, had thrown her-

self back in her chair, but she revived at sight of Mabel, and exclaimed with fervor, "O dear Miss Mabel, how glad I am to see you!"

It was with something like reverence that Mabel seated herself beside Rose on a low stool, from which one of the children had just risen, and taking her little shrunken hand, pressed it with affectionate fervor.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, Rose," said she, gazing into the child's face with a warm expression of interest. "She really has a color in her cheeks," observed she to Mrs. Hope, who stood watching Rose's countenance with mingled pleasure and anxiety.

"Yes," replied the widow, with some hesitation, "I'm afraid it ain't quite natural, though; she's apt to be feverish about this time of day."

"You are tired, Rose, with teaching your little class," said Mabel. "It is too much for your strength, I think."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Rose, eagerly. "It is very easy teaching them—I love to." And then, as if anxious to turn the conversation from herself, she addressed numerous inquiries to Alick and Murray, both of whom had pressed close to her side, asking them concerning Lydia, their mamma, and the mode in which they had come thither. Now and then she turned her smiling countenance upon Mabel, with deep and admiring affection, her glance in some degree expressing the two-fold happiness which she experienced in the presence of one in whom her own loving nature recognized a kindred spirit, while the appreciation of the beautiful, which was inherent in the little invalid, found in this new friend the perfect and only illustration of its ideal.

It was with mingled emotions that Mabel perceived the influence she exercised. As she met the admiring glance of Rose, a glow of self-satisfaction overspread her face, such as all the flatteries of the ball-room could not call up. But this sentiment of gratified vanity was chastened and subdued by an unwonted sense of unworthiness, which forced itself upon

her as she compared her own aimless life with the self-devotion of the invalid child.

This latter sentiment asserted itself still more strongly before the conclusion of the visit.

The little company were met together on more free and familiar terms than on the occasion of their first becoming acquainted. Mabel's easy cordiality disarmed all embarrassment and reserve, and even the awkward constraint of the widow Hope was not proof against the considerate kindness of her manner. Thus the conversation became brisk and general, the contrast in social position was well-nigh forgotten, and the previous good understanding of the parties was ripening into the confidence of friendship.

Something of Mrs. Hope's family history was elicited, some reminiscences of her better days were called up, and her hopes and fears for the future welfare of herself and family, touched upon. Rose's week-day employments, and her Sabbath labors and pleasures, were enumerated and discussed, and Jack was for the first time brought to Mabel's knowledge, through the frequent mention which was made of him.

Into all this Mabel entered with ready interest, while a corresponding sympathy was expressed in return, in the countenances of both Rose and Mrs. Hope, when allusion was incidentally made to the circumstance of her having been motherless from her childhood.

Alick, meanwhile, was content to listen to the conversation, but Murray, not satisfied with playing the part of a silent spectator, began to look about him for amusement; and, espying on the table an exceedingly ragged and shabby-looking book, he tossed it on the floor, and commenced kicking it contemptuously from one end of the kitchen to the other. Observing Rose's eye wander towards him, Mabel turned, saw the nature of his occupation, and starting forward, checked his play and rescued the volume, at the same time saying, good-naturedly,

"Murray, don't kick the poor old book. I'm afraid you have no respect for age, my dear."

Rose smiled. "It has done good service," said she. "Perhaps I like it better for that."

Mabel opened it; it was an ancient copy of "Pilgrim's Progress." As she turned over the leaves she directed Alick's attention to the fact, that it was a copy of the same work she had bought for him, at his own request, a few weeks before, when he chanced to be with her in a bookstore and took a fancy to the richly-bound and beautifully illustrated book.

"Mine ain't like that," said he, with rude disdain; "Mine is handsome — that is a real ugly old thing."

As he finished speaking, his quick eye detected the mortification which Rose's face evinced at his unflattering comparison; and, regretting his thoughtlessness, he at once endeavored to atone for it, by exclaiming —

"Rose ought to have one like mine, aunt Mabel."

"She shall have one," said Mabel, unhesitatingly. "I will bring you one like Alick's, with pleasure, Rose, if you would like it."

Rose smiled pensively, but with evident satisfaction.

Alick's face glowed with delight as, without giving Rose time to reply, he proceeded to expatiate to her upon the rich binding, gilt-edged leaves, and illuminated margins of the volume she was to possess.

"Sha n't you like it, Rose?" said he, when he had finished the description.

"Will it cost much?" asked Rose, thoughtfully.

"Oh, yes!" said Alick, confidently.

"As much," said Rose, looking at Mabel, and at the same time taking up a well-worn testament which lay beside her, and a few stray leaves from a primer,—"As much as two new ones like these would cost?"

"As much as half a dozen like each of those," replied Mabel, a little astonished at the question.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose, with deep-drawn breath, "I should rather have *them*." Then, the excitement of her tone subsiding, she added, with slight hesitation, "But perhaps I ought not to be the one to choose."

"Yes, you ought," replied Mabel, while Alick looked greatly disappointed. "You shall have whichever you please, or both."

"Oh, yes, both!" said Alick, with a relieved and brightened expression of countenance.

"No, not both," said Rose, with unmistakable decision. Her practical mind, trained in the school of necessity, had seen no impropriety in suggesting the change, but her deeply sensitive nature recoiled from voluntarily placing herself under a double obligation.

"You shall have your own way, Rose," said Mabel, who had been watching her face with intense interest.

"Then I should like the testament and primers, best," said Rose. "These are all we have had to read and study in, Sunday afternoons, and they are almost worn out. The little children can't read mother's bible, because the long ff's puzzle them so; how glad they will be to have each a testament of their own — and how good you are, Miss Mabel."

"I good!" exclaimed Mabel, with the deepest sense of humility she had ever known, "It is nothing for me to furnish the books, but how much they owe to you, Rosy?" And rising from her low seat and drawing her fur mantle around her, as if about to depart, she stooped down and imprinted a kiss upon Rose's forehead, the action at the same time serving to hide the emotion which had been excited by the child's unhesitating generosity.

"Is there nothing else I can bring you?" asked she. "Can not you think of something that you could relish — something that would relieve you when you felt feverish at night?"

"Oranges!" shouted Murray, from a corner of the room, where he had seated himself astride of one of the low stools. Murray had but one pleasant association with fevers and sick rooms, and that was oranges. Every body smiled, and Mabel availed herself of the suggestion.

"I will bring her some oranges, certainly," said she, glancing at Mrs. Hope, "if you think they would be wholesome for her.

"I dare say they might be refreshing," said Mrs. Hope; "she usually has a pretty hot spell towards morning. I tell

her it would not be so if she 'd go to bed early, and not have any excitement evenings; but she sits up, playing jack-straws and so on, and sometimes after she 's in bed Jack props her up with one thing and another, and there she stays working out puzzles, and models, and I do n't know what they call 'em, until her poor back aches and she can't go to sleep."

Rose looked uneasily at her mother as she entered this complaint, and Mabel glanced inquiringly at Rose, surprised at a charge which seemed to intimate a want of prudence and docility in the youthful invalid.

"You should not do that, Rose," said she, as with both her soft hands she smoothed the light hair from the child's transparent temples. "Do you like games and puzzles so much?"

"Jack does," said Rose, in a soft, meaning whisper, meant only for Mabel's ear.

The words penetrated to the heart of the listener. There was a depth of sisterly love, and a power of self-sacrifice expressed in that simple utterance, which were irresistibly touching in one whose feebleness might seem to excuse her from all responsibility.

Mabel felt the full force of the example, which was to her, at once, a lesson and a reproach. For a moment she stood gazing at Rose, as if striving to read in her face the secret of that divine strength which was victorious over the infirmities of the flesh; then, at a loss for words, and afraid perhaps of betraying how deeply she was moved, she made haste to bid her farewell; and the boys having also taken leave of the little invalid, they all followed Mrs. Hope into the shop, from whence, having unbarred the front door, she ushered them into the street. Before taking her leave, Mabel begged that she might be kept informed through Lydia of Rose's state of health, and be applied to without reserve if there was any way in which she could minister to her comfort.

The day was fast drawing to a close, and after accompanying her little nephews to the hotel, Mabel proceeded with haste towards her own home.

What a change had two short hours effected in her air, her

countenance, and her thoughts! She had gone forth excited, restless, and unhappy, and thus, also, she returned; but how chastened, subdued, and changed, were all these emotions! Then, she was excited by vehement regrets, restless with vain longings, and unhappy from disappointed hopes. Now, her spirit was disturbed, but it was by a new revelation of things hitherto unseen; she was eager and uneasy, but it was with a vague longing to rise above her former self; she was dissatisfied, but it was the discontent whose fruit is repentance unto life eternal.

How soft, how gentle was the voice which had thus unconsciously roused a sleeping conscience! It was no startling warning, no stern alarum, which had awed and bewildered the trembling soul. It was but the soft breathing of a loving heart, giving utterance to the gentlest tones; but a still small voice within responded to the whisper, and thenceforth could not be silenced. She might resist it, — she did resist it, — for earthly temptations are strong, and heavenly impulses brief and evanescent. But it came again, an unwelcome intruder on her gayer hours, a patient supplicant pleading with her in her solitude. Like an angel sitting at the gate, warding off all hostile influences and ever waiting to be heard, it silently, secretly gathered strength for the hour when the heart should be aroused by its trumpet-call, when the conflict should be ended, and the victory won.

CHAPTER XVII.

But deeper signs
Than the radient blush of beauty,
The maiden finds,
Whenever his name is heard; —
The young heart thrills,
Forgetting herself, — her duty, —
Her dark eye fills,
And her pulse with hope is stirred.

MRS. OSGOOD.

WHILE under the influence of her visit to Rosy, and while actuated by the gentle charities it had awakened, Mabel made more than one effort to recover her former influence with Harry, and regain his confidence.

She met with partial success. He seemed, at once, touched and pained by the revival of those little sisterly attentions, which had of late been carelessly performed, or wholly omitted. Occasionally, he manifested something of his old pleasure in her society; but in other instances, hurried away, as if her presence were an unwelcome restraint. He avoided the slightest reference to his late irregularities of conduct, but at the same time hesitated not to express a deep disgust and weariness with what he termed New York life.

Sisterly sympathy and perseverance on Mabel's part, might, in time, have done much toward restoring the confidential relations which had been wont to subsist between them; but it must be confessed, she soon met with a signal discouragement to her efforts.

She had returned home at a late hour one evening, had learned from the footman that Harry had not come in, and feeling herself oppressed with more than usual anxiety, had determined to await his arrival before retiring to rest. Youth,

however, craves its season of refreshment, and weariness gradually overpowering her senses, she threw herself upon a couch in her own room and fell asleep.

She was awakened some hours later by the shuffling of feet out-side her chamber door, accompanied by a confused and noisy altercation. Starting up, her nerves trembling and her whole frame agitated with a sudden dread, she distinctly recognised the voice of her father's footman, uttering vain and fruitless expostulations, while Harry, in rough and abusive language, heaped upon him the most unsparing invectives and threats. At the same instant a neighboring door was suddenly thrown open, and a third, and equally well-known voice mingled in the debate, addressing Harry in stern, though suppressed tones of command. A moment more, and there was the tread of several feet upon the stair-case leading to the next floor; a muttered resistance was evident on Harry's part, which gradually became lost in the distance, and then all was silent.

For several minutes Mabel stood, pale and breathless, with her ear pressed close to the key-hole, but hearing no sound, at length ventured to open her door and look out. She started back, however, as if pierced by an arrow; for, though she gave but one glance without, it had revealed to her the figure of her father descending the stair-case, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and shading with his hand the lamp which he carried, while its light, falling full upon his face, proclaimed that he knew the worst.

Mabel had long anticipated this or a similar scene; still, as her eye met the woe-struck countenance of her parent, pity for Harry and mortification for herself gave place to a deep and indignant resentment against the youth who could thus bring down his father's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. She did not weep, she threw herself into no despairing attitude, but slowly paced up and down the room, her soft hazel eye glowing with an unwonted excitement, her delicately arched lip curved with something not unlike scorn. It was long before she could calm the tumult of her feelings, and when she did so, there remained a dull, heavy, and despairing conscious-

ness of misfortune, such as she had never felt before. The family calamity had reached its crisis; it was no longer a secret, stinging anxiety, hid in her own bosom; it was a melancholy but acknowledged fact.

With this thought, however, painful as it was, there yet mingled a sense of relief. She had hoped that her father might long be spared this blow, but, since it had come, it rested with him to ward off, if possible, future strokes. Some decisive means might yet be adopted for reclaiming the misguided youth, and if so, the afflicted parent would not fail to take the necessary steps. Whether or not these bolder measures required the aid of her gentle influence, she did not pause to consider; but too easily discouraged in her own feeble endeavors, and too readily excusing herself from further participation in efforts for the reformation of her prodigal brother, she gladly cast off her share of the burden. Thus, with a heavier heart, but a lightened sense of personal responsibility, she finally sought her couch.

It was at this crisis that Dudley returned to the city. Two week's sojourn in the climate of Canada, to which place anxiety concerning some property had suddenly called him, had effectually cooled his petty jealousy, and he now strove sedulously to obliterate the recollection of it from Mabel's mind. It was no difficult task. In the quick beating of her heart at his presence, she forgot all past estrangement, while the light in her eye, and the glow on her cheek, proved that no painful remembrance was suffered to interfere with her pleasure at his return.

It was now the month of March. The winter gayeties of the city had subsided, and the fashionable world were already beginning to look forward, with eager anticipation, to the approaching summer campaign. In this comparative lull between the dissipations of the metropolis and the watering-place, Dudley found the opportunity to engross more exclusively than ever the mind and heart of Mabel. The brilliant scenes of fashion no longer claimed their queen; the accomplished opera troupe had sailed for Havana; Mabel's circle of admirers had,

for the most part, either boldly urged their unsuccessful suits, or timidly withdrawn their hopeless claims to her favor; the weather was unfavorable for the popular drive or promenade; and now, if ever, was the time when intellectual amusements, refined tastes, and artistic pursuits, might easily claim their empire.

Scarcely a day passed without affording Mabel the pleasure of Dudley's society. A new book, a rare flower, the announcement of an exhibition of choice paintings, the discovery of some interesting fact in the scientific world, — any of these were sufficient excuse for a visit; or, if these failed, such were his address and tact, that he well knew how to render himself essential in any scheme of pleasure or entertainment which met her approbation. In Dudley's society, within the magic sound of his low, persuasive voice, and under the fascinating influence of his dark, dreamy eyes, Mabel had no leisure for any other contemplations or thoughts than those which his presence awakened; while, in searching with him after the beautiful in poetry, nature, and art, she was unconscious that life afforded the opportunity for higher or nobler pursuits.

Fatal as this ascendancy was to her truest and purest aspirations, it may well be believed that it did not tend to encourage those schemes of sisterly benevolence and charity which she might otherwise have cherished; for Dudley was not the man, under any circumstances, to risk his own unstained reputation by the attempt to countenance and uphold a falling friend. Mabel was not long in becoming conscious of the gradual decay of his intimacy with Harry, and thus both his example and influence tended to discourage her efforts and hopes in her brother's behalf; while his dominion over her thoughts was such as to soothe the mortification she suffered at the misconduct of the unhappy youth, and allay her fears for his possible fate.

Whatever might be his motive, — or even if he had no serious motive at all, — Dudley spared no pains to establish an exclusive empire over Mabel's heart and life, and voluntarily submitting to his guidance, she yielded herself to his wishes

and tastes, allowed herself to be swayed by his opinions, and blindly adopted his maxims.

Thus he was satisfied, and she was happy.

At least she believed herself happy. It was a strange, fitful, capricious mingling of emotions, unworthy of that name which expresses what is rarely found on earth, the essence of all joy. It was a happiness purchased at the price of much imagined, much hoped for, much forgotten. It was but the fluttering of a young heart which had not yet found a resting-place. Alas! like the dove let loose from the ark, it would long seek repose in vain.

Such as this so-called happiness was, it was subject to many interruptions. Like all selfish natures, Dudley was ungenerous even in his affections. He demanded more than he gave. He scrupulously avoided any other declaration of his sentiments toward her than that which his whole manner conveyed; but still, assuming rights to which he had established no claim, he hesitated not to exercise his influence over her habits of thought and life, and even presumed to criticise, and occasionally, as we have seen, take umbrage at her conduct.

It was true, he possessed a grace and tact which knew how to veil what was in reality officious, beneath an air of flattering assiduity, and his eccentricities furnished an excuse for what would have been overbearing in another; still, Mabel's spirit could not easily brook the inequalities of his manner toward her, and she occasionally met his sudden coldness and constraint with a haughtiness equal to his own air of petrified reserve.

Then followed intervals of unacknowledged but evident alienation, when Mabel, suddenly thrown upon her own resources, experienced a reaction which made her past elation of spirit seem a delusion and a mockery.

During these intervals, all the elements of unhappiness in her home presented themselves with redoubled force.

Her aunt's complaints and inuendoes, which had formerly been limited to the unamiable deportment of Mrs. Leroy, and the impositions she continually practised upon her circle of

relatives, had now found a new and inexhaustible subject, in that still greater cause of apprehension and distress, which Mabel had so dreaded to have come to her knowledge, but with which she had inevitably become acquainted. Louise had acquired more boldness than ever in her schemes of deception and self-indulgence; while Mabel's temper was incessantly tried by her sister's heartless indifference to her pleasure and convenience. A certain fixed rigidity of expression served to cover and conceal the emotions and purposes of Mr. Vaughan's mind, but there was a stoop in his hitherto erect figure, and a hollowness in his pale cheeks, which stamped him as an old man, worn with care. And Harry! Ah! poor Harry! Where and what was he? Mabel dared not ask or think. But the eye that could no longer look fearlessly into that of his fellow-man; the hand that hesitated ere it grasped the hand of him who had once been a friend; the face from which youth and beauty were rapidly passing away;— all these were silent witnesses to a sad and sorrowful tale.

But, not only did these intervals of solitary reflection bring up in long array the trials of Mabel's lot; they brought with them, also, another remembrance, which was banished from her gayer and happier hours, — the remembrance of one who, amid privation, hardship, and pain, had learned life's holiest lesson, and finding in her little sphere a humble path of duty, trod it with the heroism of a martyr and the patience of a saint. She could not be blind to this living example, nor deaf to the secret monitor it had awakened in her heart. False theories and selfish reasonings might shake her faith in abstract principles, but no sophistry could refute or obscure the sacred truth which emanated from the life of Rosy.

The thought of this pious little pilgrim, and her daily walk with God, could not fail to awaken in a nature so candid and impressible as Mabel's, many a pang of self-questioning and self-reproach; but with these salutary stings of conscience there came other and no less beneficent influences, which were at once welcome and sweet.

The heart that was wounded and grieved by unkindness,

misconstruction, and reserve, found repose and refreshment in the thought of one, whose spirit, bathed in divine love, scattered abroad the heavenly dew of a true and tender sympathy; while hopes that were rudely crushed under a weight of trial, were renewed and sanctified by the blessed assurance that there is a rest, even on earth, which remaineth for the people of God.

Mabel's spirits were invariably calmed and soothed by a visit to Rosy; her mind at once subdued and strengthened. She felt something of the patience which springs from submission; some ray of the hope that comes by faith. She went her way, if not fortified with a holy purpose, at least imbued with a humble desire to imitate, while self was for the time forgotten in the strong and living desire to do something for the welfare and happiness of others.

These disinterested and generous aspirations were often discouraged by difficulties, or palsied by indifference, before an opportunity presented itself for proving their existence; but occasionally their influence might be detected in the generous earnestness with which she sought to carry out some benevolent or praiseworthy purpose.

She was driving one day through a street not very distant from Mrs. Hope's residence, when her attention was attracted by some uncommonly fine fruit, displayed in the window of a grocer's shop. She had observed, on a recent visit to Rosy, that the stock of oranges with which she had of late kept her constantly provided, was nearly exhausted, and it occurred to her that she would take advantage of being in the neighborhood to renew the supply. She hastily pulled the check string, and Donald, in obedience to her orders, drew up his horses in front of the shop, his somewhat scornful countenance expressing the surprise he felt that his young mistress should have occasion to enter so insignificant a grocery establishment. Mabel, however, much more independent than her fastidious coachman, quite unconscious indeed of derogating from her dignity, alighted without hesitation, and entering, commenced making her purchases.

While the youth who waited on her was engaged in weighing some grapes, her attention was attracted to a couple of boys who were lounging outside the counter.

"I say, Jack," said the taller of the two, — "if you 'll wheel that 'ere load o' shells down to Tattam's, at the river side, I 'll treat to seats in the pit at the Bowery, to-night. Come, old feller, what do you say to that? Tom Ratlin plays 'The Devil among the Scullions' — that 'll be sport. Tom Ratlin 's the boy for me! Come, say done to that."

"I won't touch none o' your old oyster shells," answered the boy who was thus addressed, — a short, stout, freckled, and thick-lipped urchin, whose great prominent teeth gave a peculiar expression to his face, but who had, nevertheless, a frank, honest, and on the whole, prepossessing countenance.

"You won't?" answered the first speaker — "more fool you. It pays enough sight better than sellin' your mother's 'lasses candy;" and he glanced contemptuously at a tray loaded with that article, suspended by a leather strap around the neck of his companion.

The latter, evidently mortified and touched by this allusion to his occupation, which he had in truth somewhat outgrown, turned very red in the face, and with mingled shame and anger retorted, "Candy sellin' is better business, any how, than workin' for folks that promise big and do n't pay at all. Better settle old scores 'fore you talk o' runnin' up new ones."

"I do n't owe yer nothin'," replied the first speaker angrily.

"Do n't yer?" exclaimed Jack. "What did ever I get, I want to know, for luggin' them two kegs of oysters from your old man's cellar down to the Jersey ferry? Nice kind o' business, was n't it? to see you jump on board the boat with your kegs, and go off a leavin' me in the lurch. I ain't forgot it, I tell yer."

The larger boy laughed boisterously at this reminiscence, seeming to think it a capital joke. "Why, what could I do?" exclaimed he — "could n't keep the boat a wait'n — had n't no chance to bribe the capt'n; had to be off in a jiffy. But, look here Jack," continued he persuasively, "you

wheel the shells down to Tattam's, and I'll pay up — honor bright!"

"What, pay for both jobs — this and t' other one too?"

"I guess so. I'll see," said the tall boy evasively.

"No, none o' yer guessin', Bob, — we 'll have a clear bargain this time."

"Well, well," said Bob, "you shall have a chance at the theatre, any way."

"And the cock-tail, too?"

"'T wa'n't a cock-tail I promised," said Bob.

"'T was a cock-tail, — 't wa'n't nothin' else," retorted Jack, with spirit.

"Oh, Jack! you 're a goin' it like a fine feller," exclaimed Bob, slapping him on the shoulder; "Tom Ratlin and a cock-tail. Well, you shall have both on 'em if you 'll go right away. I 'll have the shells round here in the wink o' your eye. I left the wheelbarrow just round the corner; you hold on till I fetch it," and with these words Bob shot off through a side door, to complete his bargain.

"What does he mean? what is he going to give that boy?" asked Mabel, of the youth who was tying up her purchases.

The lad looked up, met her earnest, inquiring eye, and stooping down to bite off a piece of twine, endeavored to hide a smile which was creeping over his face.

Mabel, observing his hesitation, repeated her question, and the youth looking up again, and seeing the immovable gravity of her features, composed his own, while he said, in answer to the second query —

"Mean by what, ma'am? a cock-tail?"

'Yes."

Something to drink," replied the young man; and unable ·w to conceal how much he was amused at Mabel's curiosity, ·e laughed outright, at the same time collecting his parcels with the view of taking them to the carriage.

"I thought so — I was afraid so," said Mabel, her features still grave and reproachful; "it is a shame!" Then, as the

shopman's clerk passed out with the packages, she hesitated, and finally walked directly up to Jack, who was casting a side-long glance at her, as if he suspected himself to be the subject of remark.

"Don't you take it," said she kindly and impressively, at the same time giving more force to her words by laying a gentle, restraining hand on Jack's arm.

Jack — Jack Hope, for he it was, though Mabel had no suspicion of the fact — looked up, met her mild, reproving glance, cast an eye at the same time at her rich garments, striking air, and noble figure, and then looking down with a half-defiant, half-mortified expression, stood kicking one foot against the counter.

"What shall I give you not to take it?" asked Mabel, after a pause.

Once more Jack's eye met hers, but drooped the next instant beneath the compassionate and imploring expression with which she gazed into his face.

There was another instant of silence, for Jack made no reply to her question.

Mabel now drew a gold dollar from her purse, and laid it on the counter. Jack glanced at it with an eager longing that could not be mistaken, but this time he did not venture to look up at Mabel.

"Do you want that?" said she.

"I want it bad," said the boy, "but — but — "

"But what?"

Jack hesitated, then said, bringing out his words with a jerk, as if they were forced from him, "I don't like to be bought off, — it's mean."

Mabel was struck with the boy's rude sense of honor; she looked puzzled for a moment, then said, "Isn't there some one at home you could spend it for? haven't you a mother, or a sister? it would not be mean, if you bought something for them."

Unconsciously she had struck the master-chord. Jack looked

searchingly up in her face, forgetting his former awe in the deeper curiosity to discover how she had pierced his secret thoughts.

Mabel saw her advantage, and acted upon it.

"Do not take what that wicked boy promised you," said she, "and don't go to the theatre either; keep out of such bad company, or you will be ruined; here, you shall have the dollar, and welcome, only don't put it to a bad use; perhaps you can think of something to buy with it that will please them all at home, and make them proud and happy."

"I do want it for somethin' particklar," said the boy; "it a'n't nothin' bad, as true as the world it a'n't."

"Well, then," said Mabel, "take it; I believe you, for you look as if you were speaking the truth; here, put it in your pocket."

"What shall I tell Bob?" said the boy, in audible soliloquy.

"Oh, don't tell him anything, — run off before he comes back — that's the best way."

Jack smiled at the earnestness of his beautiful mentor, and lifted his tray of candy, which he had lain down in anticipation of entering Bob's service.

In her eagerness to see him depart, Mabel stretched out her delicately gloved hand and assisted him in fitting the leather strap to his shoulder.

"There, now, run," said she, smiling with pleasure at her own success. "Good-bye! remember!" and Jack trudged off, looked back once or twice to watch her as she entered her carriage, and then took to his heels, according to her recommendation.

About half an hour afterwards, as Mabel was sitting in the widow Hope's shop, talking with Rose, while Donald was pacing his horses up and down at some little distance from the house, the shop-door was violently flung open, the bell which was attached to it rung unmercifully, and Jack rushed hastily in, holding up his dollar and exclaiming, "Hurrah, Rose! no matter now where I got it, but here is just money enough to

pay for — " he had reached this point in his exclamation, when he suddenly caught sight of Mabel, who had hitherto been concealed by the door behind which she sat. He stopped short, staggered back in his astonishment, turned very red in the face, and without pausing for question or apology, clapped both fists to his mouth and darted out as abruptly as he had entered.

Rose, sadly mortified at this unmannerly entrance and exit, endeavored to excuse him to Mabel by remarking, "That is Jack — he is n't much used to company."

But Mabel, whose mind was wholly occupied with the coincidence which had thus proved the candy-boy to be identical with Rose's brother, did not seem to hear her, and Rose, fearing from her silence that she was displeased, suggested in further extenuation of Jack's behavior, "He is not always so rude, Miss Mabel."

"Rude, Oh, no!" answered Mabel promptly, recovering from her momentary abstraction, and observing Rosy's troubled expression; "he did not mean to be rude; he was surprised, that was all. I feel very much interested in Jack, Rose. He seems to be a good-hearted boy."

Rose looked inexpressibly gratified. "He is — he is, Miss Mabel," exclaimed she earnestly; and thus encouraged to speak on the subject, she did not pause until she had exhausted the catalogue of his good qualities.

Mingled with her praises, however, it was not difficult to detect a secret anxiety and doubt lest these very good qualities should become corrupted by the evil influences to which his street traffic inevitably exposed him, and with the clue furnished her by the occurrences of the morning, Mabel understood better than ever before the self-devotion and perseverance with which his little invalid sister strove to keep him as much as possible at her side.

This little incident failed not to leave a strong impression on Mabel's mind. It had afforded her the happiness of performing a benevolent action; it had created a new bond of sympa-

thy between herself and Rose, — above all, it had revealed to her a fresh proof of the beauty and power of that holy love which no selfish doubts can chill or blight, but which, living on through suffering, change, decay, and death, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.

CHAPTER XVIII.

And some we trusted with a fond believing,
Have turned and stung us to the bosom's core—
And life hath seemed but as a vain deceiving,
From which we turn aside—heart-sick and sore.

MRS. M. T. W. CHANDLER.

THE early spring months had passed away, the silent process of nature had nearly reached its full development, and summer was close at hand. The city parks were carpeted with a bright green sod, and the elm trees waved over them the opening buds and tassels of verdure, which were daily forming a thicker and thicker canopy of shade. Birds sang in the branches, and now and then perched on the eaves or open windows of the tall city houses, while the soft breezes, the warmth of the mid-day sun, the sound of children's voices, and the glow of animal life and spirit which pervaded the streets and thoroughfares, gave evidence of the renewing and revivifying power with which summer and sunshine penetrate even to the heart of the great metropolis.

It was a lovely morning, towards the close of the month of May, when Mabel, with a miniature watering-pot in her hand, stood listlessly gazing from out her dressing-room window into a beautiful open square directly opposite. She had been engaged in watering a few plants, Harry's thoughtful gift many months before; but her mind had wandered from her occupation, and though her eye was fixed upon the sunny green sward of the little park, the dreamy smile upon her countenance proclaimed her to be roaming far away in the pleasant fields of imagination. Home still had its cares; the present, its bitterness; the future, its anxiety; but these had no part in her present reverie, for, giving the reins to a charmed fancy, and,

for the time, banishing every painful thought, she was dwelling with fond and eager anticipation upon that ever fruitful prospect of enjoyment, a young girl's first journey.

Even before she left school, when all the pleasures of freedom were yet untasted, there had been no theme more exciting to her youthful enthusiasm, than the confident hope of one day visiting the romantic Falls of Trenton, the gigantic cataract of Niagara, and the St. Lawrence, with its Thousand Isles — national elements of beauty and grandeur, with which she rightly deemed it desirable to become acquainted, before indulging still more glowing anticipations of foreign travel.

These were but vague yearnings, however, in comparison with the alluring visions which had recently been awakened in her youthful and ardent nature, by one who, himself familiar with the beauties of American scenery, possessed the power to kindle her imagination and excite her feelings by his animated description of the scenes of his boyish homage.

And if the eloquent tongue of Dudley had power to clothe these grand and picturesque regions with a new halo of beauty and romance, it may well be believed that Mabel's heart was stirred with no common glow of delighted anticipation, at the added hope she was now indulging, of visiting these favored spots in his companionship, being initiated by him into the peculiar charms which pertain to each, and being suffered to believe that the sight of her fresh enjoyment would awaken in him a pleasure, equal, if not superior, to that he had once experienced in his own.

Early in the spring, when Mabel's friends were discussing their plans for the season, she had frequently mentioned her expectation of spending the month of June in travelling. As the time drew near, however, and Mr. Vaughan declared his engagements to be such as to forbid all thought of the journey, she freely expressed, amid her own little circle, the disappointment which she felt at the project's being thus unexpectedly abandoned.

"Why cannot we make an excursion party to the Falls?" exclaimed Dudley, one evening when, a small party being as-

sembled in Mrs. Leroy's drawing-room, the subject was accidentally introduced.

"Mrs. Leroy, Mrs. Broadhead, does the idea strike you agreeably? Come, Mr. Earle; you just confessed yourself at a loss how to get rid of next month,"—and turning to various others, who chanced to be present, he found some ingenious method of recommending his proposition to each.

The challenge, though playfully made, met with general acceptance, and Dudley had the satisfaction of seeing his apparently careless suggestion acted upon at once. Most of the company consisted of this world's idlers,—the acknowledged drones of society, who were restricted by no claims of business or of duty,—and the plan and route which Dudley proceeded to sketch were unanimously adopted.

Mr. Leroy had left New York early in May, to attend to some important transactions at the West, and Louise was at liberty to follow her own inclinations; while Mabel, never doubting the consent of her indulgent father, lent a ready ear to a scheme which she believed to be designed for her especial benefit.

Thus a plan was concerted, which, gaining in popularity from day to day, soon became the engrossing topic of interest and conversation between Mabel and her friends; and while all found in it a welcome source of pleasure, Mabel's heart thrilled with a dreamy ecstacy of delight, as she listened to the low-spoken words of hope and expectation which Dudley breathed into her ear, as he talked of the promised journey, or as she pondered in secret on the vague, half-uttered terms in which he confessed his happiness to be in this, as in all things, dependent on her own.

None of the party were willing to leave New York until after a fashionable and long-talked-of wedding reception, which was to take place at a country seat a few miles from the city, and, in anticipation of which, the fashionable world had been content to linger in town to a later period than usual.

This festive occasion was now close at hand, and, as Mabel stood at the window and counted up the days which must elapse

before the commencement of her little tour, her pleasant reflections were interrupted by the thought, that she had not yet found an opportunity to broach the matter to her father. So confident was she, however, that the independence she had hitherto enjoyed would not be interfered with in this particular, that she was dismissing the subject from her mind, with the simple conclusion, I must not forget to mention it to him tomorrow,—when her meditations were still further disturbed by the unusual sound of his footsteps within her room, and looking up, she found him close beside her with an open letter in his hand.

He replied at once to the inquiring expression of her face, saying, "I have news from your Aunt Margaret, my dear."

Mabel started, and a look of sudden alarm passed over her face, for her Aunt Sabiah had left them a week before, in compliance with an invitation to pass the summer with her recently widowed sister, and Mabel feared some accident had befallen her. "Is anything the matter?" asked she quickly. "Aunt Sabiah —"

"Your aunts are both well," interrupted her father; "this letter is in reply to a message I sent by your Aunt Sabiah last week; it comes very opportunely,—it is very kind, very hospitable in your Aunt Margaret; it gratifies me exceedingly," and he handed the letter for her perusal.

Mabel's face was expressive of mingled emotions as she read, but puzzled surprise predominated; and as she finished, she looked up with the abrupt remark, "About Harry? I do not understand it father."

"Harry goes to L. next week," said Mr. Vaughan, speaking decidedly, with compressed lips, and in a tone which deprecated curiosity or inquiry. "He is to study law with my old friend, Judge Paradox, and will commence immediately."

Mabel was about to express astonishment at this sudden choice of a profession, and question her father more closely, but observing the expression of his countenance, she checked herself, satisfied rather to await such explanation as he might think proper to give.

He gave none, however, but, as if deeming the announcement of his intentions with regard to Harry sufficient, went on to say, in quick disjointed sentences, and much as if soliloquizing, "Your aunt not only proposes to receive Harry until his rooms are in readiness, but gives you, I think, a very cordial invitation to accompany him. I am very glad of this,—I wish you to know your aunt,—I have not seen her myself for these five years,—it will be pleasant for you to be with Harry, and the plan will in every way be a great relief to me. I have just heard from Mr. Leroy, and find that my affairs will compel me to join him at the West, immediately; so I shall close the house, and come to L. to meet you when I return, which I hope will be before many weeks. I dread the journey very much, but it cannot be postponed any longer."

Mabel's countenance fell, as she listened to this programme of her father's intentions and wishes; even the sight of his haggard and anxious face, failed to win her from the contemplation of her own disappointment. She stood silent and thoughtful, looked out of the window, bit her lip, and made no reply.

Mr. Vaughan, who was slowly pacing the room, glanced up at length, as if awaiting some response to his own expressions of satisfaction, and then said, watching her face meanwhile, and speaking in the tone of considerate kindness with which he always addressed her—"I hope you like the plan, my daughter; your Aunt Margaret is a stranger, to be sure, but Sabiah is there, you know." Already he had detected her repugnance to the arrangement, and was solicitous to place it in the best possible light.

"Yes," said Mabel, hesitating, "but I was in hopes"—

Her voice faltered as she spoke, but her father reassured her, drawing near, standing with his hands clasped behind him, and patiently awaiting what she had to say, while he aided her with the inquiry—"What did you hope, my dear? had you any other plan at heart?"

Thus encouraged, she acknowledged the scheme of pleasure which she found it so hard to forego, explained the route, enu-

merated the party, and, while she forbore to urge the point, made no secret of her preference.

"Louise is going?" asked Mr. Vaughan, as he thoughtfully resumed his walk up and down the room.

"Yes."

"And Harry?" added he, with hesitation, "did he expect to make one of the party?"

"No," answered Mabel, with a thrill of pain which was like the sting of conscience, for she well knew that no one had requested Harry's company on the excursion.

"And you are very anxious to go?"

"I was," said Mabel, hesitatingly, "Yes." And with nervous agitation she stood picking the withered leaves from a geranium, while she awaited her father's decision.

Her cause was in safe hands. Mr. Vaughan had no courage to disappoint her; he could far better bear to be disappointed himself. So, after a short pause, he said, "Very well, you shall do as you please, my dear; only I hope in the course of the summer you will find time to make your aunt Margaret a short visit, at least. Suppose you answer the letter, and tell her you will come in July or August."

Mabel promised to do so, and the matter being settled, Mr. Vaughan, who had no time to waste, hurried away to his office.

Mabel stood and looked after him as he crossed the little park — her kind, indulgent father, who could refuse her nothing. How she thanked and blessed him! Her aged and care-worn father, with a stooping gait and a shadow on his brow, — was the deeper whisper of her conscience. Did she deserve from him a blessing in return?

Her pathway, it is true, is free. He has left her at liberty to go when and where she will; his restraining hand places no clog upon her footsteps, his love has broken down every barrier to her looked-for happiness — every barrier save one, and that a dull, heavy, impatient knocking at her heart, an intruding thought, a stern and solemn appeal, striving to make itself heard. Shall she give the strange, unwelcome guest admittance?

The question was answered by the sudden entrance of Louise, who was full of excitement in view of the approaching wedding and pleasure-party, and whose voluble tongue soon put to flight every serious thought which had taken possession of her sister's mind. She was criticising and commenting upon various rich articles of dress which formed a part of Mabel's spring wardrobe, when a figure of ample proportions presented itself within the door of the dressing-room, and a loud voice exclaimed, "Ah, here you are! Cecilia admitted me, and I ventured to come up stairs without waiting to be invited. Oh, Mabel, what a sweet bonnet! — fresh from Paris, I'll bet a trifle! And this is your travelling suit — a shade darker than Vic's, but beautifully trimmed, is n't it Lu?" And the stout Mrs. Vannecker, exhausted and breathless, sank panting upon the sofa.

"Throw off your mantle, and take a seat at this open window," said Mabel, observing the flushed and heated condition of her visitor.

"No, no, thank you, let me sit here," replied the lady, taking a fan which Mabel offered, and fanning herself vigorously. "Oh, these are lovely!" observed she, examining some rich flounced silks which, just received from the dressmaker's, hung over the arm of the couch. "That shade of green is very trying, though, and the pink is rather pale. I dare say it will light up well, though. Vanity of vanities!" she continued, in a theatrical manner, uttering at the same time something between a sigh and an endeavor to catch her breath; "What would Mr. Lincoln Dudley say, with his contempt for finery, if he should see all this exhibition of the fine arts, as he calls it?"

Mabel looked up quickly, as Mrs. Vannecker thus quoted her friend, but the tongue of the loquacious lady did not need even the encouragement of a look.

"I declare, girls," exclaimed she, "I say to you as I said to Vic, this morning, — I almost wish Mr. Dudley was n't going with us on our journey. I can't say I think him much of an addition to the party, he has become such a stoic — cynic, I

mean," added she, after a pause, during which she discovered her mistaken use of terms.

Mabel turned away and smiled—not at the mistake, but at Mrs. Vannecker's desire to exclude Mr. Dudley from a party of his own arranging, into which she had intruded herself and her daughter, uninvited.

"Is he a cynic?" said Louise, absently. "Mabel, what did De Trou make you pay for those flowers?"

"To be sure he is," said Mrs. Vannecker, replying to the first question. "I don't know any better name for him. You heard how he abused every body and every thing that night at your house; and last evening I met him at the Earle's, and such a setting-down as he gave the New Yorkers!—so many jackanapes among the young men—so many fine women spoiled by fashion! I assure you, I felt myself called upon to act as their champion, and trust I was tolerably successful. I talked him down, at all events—that was one comfort."

"It must have required a large stock of words, I should think, Mrs. Vannecker, to defend so poor a cause," said Mabel, betraying in her manner, no less than her remark, a disposition to justify Dudley's severity.

"A poor cause!" exclaimed Mrs. Vannecker. "So you side with my lord Dudley, do you, Mabel, and condemn society in the same wholesale manner? Well, I have understood you were a pupil of his."

"I do not speak of society generally," resumed Mabel, "but an intellectual man, like Mr. Dudley, can not be expected to have much sympathy with silly women and coxcombs."

"And how many of us, do you suppose, he excludes from that list? Not me, though I came under the privileged head of 'Present company,' nor you, my dear," added she with a coarse laugh, "though you are so ready to ratify his opinions. You had your share of the lash, as well as the rest of us; however, don't look so crest-fallen," added she, seeing Mabel suddenly change color and look down; "one must pay some penalty for being the most popular belle of the season; and if nobody finds fault with you but a crusty old bachelor, like Mr.

Dudley, you must n't complain, even if the world does give him the credit of being a genius and all that."

"Old!" remarked Louise, who engaged in trying on Mabel's new bonnet only caught a word, now and then, of a conversation to which she felt wholly indifferent. "I do n't call Mr. Dudley old; he can't be much over thirty."

"I do n't know his age," answered Mrs. Vannecker, tartly. "I only know he has outlived his good humor. Why, when Mr. Earle said something about Theodore Marston's beauty and accomplishments, and the splendid establishment in which he would instate the lady of his choice,"—and she gave a meaning glance at Mabel,—"Mr. Dudley snarled as if somebody had stepped on his toes. I declare, if it had not always been said that he never bowed at any shrine, and was not a marrying man, I should certainly think he had been refused years ago by some reigning star, and had not yet recovered from the mortification. I suppose he comes under the head of 'poor and proud,' and that accounts for his being such a fault-finder."

"Why, I thought Mr. Dudley liked society," said Louise; "we always meet him everywhere."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Vannecker, "and what is he there for? To play the agreeable in company, and abuse people behind their backs. Now, that is what I call being a downright hypocrite! For instance: we all know how much he has patronized Mabel this winter—all because he thought it a feather in his cap to be in the van of her admirers—and now, I will just tell what he said about her, if it 's only to convince the child that I did n't waste words, as she calls it, without provocation."

Mabel stooped down and appeared to be busily searching for some missing article in her bureau drawer, while Mrs. Vannecker continued—

"You must know we were talking, as every body is now, about Fan Broadhead's marriage with the colonel, and Mrs. Earle remarked that she thought it a capital match."

"'Capital!' said Mr. Dudley, echoing Mrs. Earle's words.

'A most thorough-going, complete, and satisfactory conformity with the usages of society. Beauty, youth, and all the modern accomplishments set off against a town-house, a country-house, a cottage at Newport, and a carriage for every season of the year. Capital, upon my word!'

"You can't imagine," said Mrs. Vannecker, "how bitter and sarcastic his tone was; and Mr. Earle, who is Fan's cousin, you know, could not help noticing it."

"'So, Mr. Dudley,' said he, 'you do n't think there is much sentiment in the matter.'

"'Sentiment, — pshaw!' said Mr. Dudley, 'what has a fashionable girl to do with sentiment? The heart is the last thing to be consulted when a New York belle marries.'

"'Why,' said I, 'there's Mabel Vaughan and Mr. Marston —'"

"Mrs. Vannecker!" exclaimed Mabel, looking up with crimson face and flashing eyes, "how could you couple my name —"

"It was only by way of argument, my dear," responded Mrs. Vannecker.

"Yes, but connected as you are," faltered Mabel, "it would be thought —"

"Nothing would be thought, but what is true, I suspect, or will be one of these days; if not, you can contradict the reports that are circulating, my dear; but let me go on with my story, and you shall judge what Lincoln Dudley's opinion of you is.

"'There's Mabel Vaughan and Mr. Marston,' said I, 'they are both young, and handsome, and accomplished; do you mean to say that is a match where there is no romance, no affection between the parties?'

"'I do,' said he, looking at me as if I had insulted him. 'Miss Vaughan has too much sense to bestow her affections on such a paltry bit of frippery.'

"'And yet, you believe she will bestow her hand on him?' said I.

"'I do not pretend to question it,' said he, in his decided way. 'Why should she not? All fashionable girls are alike;

they live for the world, marry to please the world, and would die sooner than defy the world's opinion. Love in a cottage is no longer to be thought of. I will venture to say that I do not know a woman in New York capable of sacrificing the love of display to any higher sentiment; and Miss Vaughan is the last who could be expected to prove an exception to the rule. She has passed through all the phases of a fashionable career, except the phase matrimonial, — she will scarcely stop short of the blissful climax.' "

"There, that was a long speech, but I treasured up every word of it, Mabel, for I was determined to tell you. I assure you I was quite indignant at hearing him talk as if girls now-a-days had n't any feeling. I gave him a pretty sharp piece of my mind, too, and I dare say he felt it, though he never made me a bit of an answer, but bowed all round the room, in his provokingly graceful manner, and went off as unconcerned as you please. What do you think now, Mabel, of the justice of Mr. Dudley's criticisms?"

Wounded feeling, pride, and indignation, were all depicted in Mabel's countenance. "I think, Mrs. Vannecker," said she, evading a direct reply, "that it is very unpleasant to be made the subject of a drawing-room discussion, and in future I must beg — "

"O, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Vannecker, in a conciliating tone, "it was not an occasion of any consequence, there were only half a dozen persons present, and I only mentioned you and Mr. Marston, as an instance of a young couple who were every way suited to each other."

"But it was a very mistaken instance," persisted Mabel. "I have no interest whatever in Mr. Marston, and wish it to be so understood."

"Oh, la! what a fuss about nothing!" exclaimed Louise. "You know, May, if you are not engaged to Theodore Marston, very likely you will be one of these days, — there is not another such match in the city."

"Why, Louise, I do n't know what you mean," exclaimed Mabel, tears of vexation starting to her eyes.

Louise only replied by glancing with an incredulous smile at Mrs. Vannecker, at the same time humming a popular air, and practising before the mirror a few steps of a new and difficult dance. "It is growing very warm," drawled she, in a languishing manner, "I must go before it is any hotter. You 'll call for me in good season Thursday morning, May. I wonder if Fan Broadhead will make a handsome bride."

"Wait a moment, Lu," said Mrs. Vannecker, snatching up her parasol and scarf, and looking about her for her gloves. "Vic will wonder what has become of me. So you don't mean to have your engagement with Mr. Marston come out yet, pet?" said she, tapping Mabel lightly under the chin, as the latter stooped to pick up one of the fallen gloves.

"No, — never!" said Mabel, with a vehemence unusual to her.

"Oh, don't say that," replied Mrs. Vannecker, coaxingly, as she squeezed through the doorway. "Ask Harry to come in, dear, and talk the journey over with us. Vic has twenty questions to put to him."

"Harry is not going on the journey," said Mabel, quickly.

"Not going!" ejaculated Mrs. Vannecker, in a tone of unmistakable chagrin. "Do you really mean so? Why, you astonish me. I took it for granted he was going, — so did Vic. How came we to be so mistaken?"

Mabel did not reply; and the dismayed lady, after repeated expressions of self-condolence, left the room, with the words, "I *am* disappointed, — Harry not going, — what will Vic say?"

CHAPTER XIX.

O changing child and woman,
Thou hadst not second sight!
Or bending down thy forehead white,
The human to the human,
The idol's shadow would have made
Its light to vanish like a shade. MRS. BROWNING.

MABEL returned to her dressing-room, threw herself into a seat at the open window, and, with her hands dropped listlessly on her lap, and her eyes gazing vacantly into a piece of blue sky opposite, became lost in thought.

"So, Dudley thinks me a complete fashionist, a mere worldling," was her inward meditation. "Who has had such an opportunity of knowing me as he has? To whom have I confided my thoughts, hopes, and aspirations, so freely as to him? and, can he have thus misunderstood me? Can he really believe me the cold, calculating, mercenary creature, whom he professes to despise? How unjust! how cruel! Is it my fault that I move in a circle of fashion? Is it anything but the accident of my lot that placed me here? Are my views, motions, actions, all to be measured by the standard of my frivolous acquaintances? I did not choose them, they were chosen for me, and I only play my part in the sphere assigned by nature. These fine clothes," thought she, as rising impatiently from her seat, her eyes fell on the rich silks and laces which were profusely scattered around, "do I want them? do I care for them? Are they not the mere accompaniments of my present position? This face and figure which the world calls beautiful," and she paused before the mirror, "do I covet beauty, save as it may make me attractive in his eyes? He must know—he does know, that all else may frown and I care not, so he

only smiles. He talks of sacrifice, and yet believes that I would crush my heart down rather than relinquish the prospect of a brilliant establishment. Ah, which would be the greater sacrifice? He does not know the power of a woman's love. I knew he despised others, but I never dreamed that he had no faith in me."

Ah! that was a bitter pang indeed, that he should place her thus on a level with the vain crowds, at whom she had so often heard him sneer. Poor child! She had trusted, with all the warmth of her generous affections, in one who knew not what it was to trust. The poisoned arrows, with which she had thoughtlessly played, had rebounded and pierced her to the heart. No wonder that she smarted at the sudden wound.

But her generous confidence was not weary yet, and the first struggle with injured feeling being past, she was ready, with a true woman's inventive charity, both to palliate the offence, and excuse and pardon the offender.

"Mrs. Vannecker dislikes Mr. Dudley," thought she, "and has no doubt given her own coloring to his words; — things sound so differently when repeated; — besides, she says he is poor, — I never thought of that. He can not be poor, and his talents would be priceless in any profession; but in comparison with Mr. Marston's, his present means, perhaps, are limited." And Mabel's heart softened as she reflected on the bitterness which a sensitive man might feel, as he contrasted his narrow estate with the princely fortune of his rival. "I have been careless and imprudent, too," thought she; "no wonder he is vexed, when strangers even are deceived." And here Mabel called to mind the frequent instances, unexplained till now, when Mr. Dudley had turned coldly away at Mr. Marston's approach, or, with harsh and cutting sarcasm, had commented on the frivolous tastes and manners of the amiable and harmless young man.

"I must be more careful in future," thought she. "For my own sake, and the sake of the world's opinion, I shall be circumspect, and he shall never again have cause to feel vexed with me on this point.

"And so he believed me dazzled by the prospect of a brilliant fortune; and is that so very strange? it has blinded many a better girl than I. What should he know of my actual tastes, my love of simplicity, my hatred of display? He has seen me only surrounded by the trappings of wealth, and the object of the greatest flattery. Can he picture me as I was in my country home at Mrs. Herbert's? or imagine with what joy I should shake off the fetters and chains of this artificial life, and devote myself to the sweet and welcome tasks which constitute the comfort of a domestic fireside? I have been unjust to myself and to him; I have appeared before him only in a false character, and yet I expect him to believe me true. Henceforward he shall know me as I am."

Thus, by a process of reasoning, in which the heart, and not the head, furnished arguments, Mabel had finally arrived at a conclusion which left her, as she believed, still mistress of her own destiny. She had but to exercise the frankness, simplicity, and truth, which were her own native characteristics, and, with the knowledge she had obtained of Dudley's sensitive distrust, she should have no difficulty in removing it.

More precious than ever now seemed the opportunity afforded by the approaching journey! We have seen with what fond and romantic anticipations she had already looked forward to the escape from city thraldom, to the enjoyment of a few weeks commune with nature, and with one whom she deemed nature's fit interpreter, but now this long-talked-of excursion had suddenly assumed a new significance, a vital interest; it had become, as it were, the crisis of her life.

"No need of all this finery," thought she, as she hastily folded and put out of sight the offending articles of dress, the nervous trembling of her busy fingers keeping time to the impatient fluttering of the young heart yearning for an occasion to prove the genuineness of its devotion. "Travelling furnishes no necessity for elaborate toilettes," was her exulting reflection; "it imposes none of the restrictions of city life. For a while, at least, I can act myself, and be happy in the way I love best."

And how were these sentiments responded to by the man for whose sake this devoted young heart would have deemed nothing a sacrifice? Was this ready self-consecration met with corresponding zeal?

Alas! Mrs. Vannecker — manœuvering, gossiping, worldly woman though she was — had spoken some homely truths. The cold, calculating, selfish Dudley well deserved the name of hypocrite, — for who is a greater hypocrite than he who stamps another as a coward, while he himself is ready to play the poltroon. He had dared to question Mabel's disinterestedness and capability of self-sacrifice; could his own soul have denied the truth, that he himself was guilty of the very weakness he contemned in another? Mrs. Vannecker had proclaimed his want of confidence in the woman he professed to love, but this was but half the truth; for truer, sadder, more fatal still — he had no confidence in himself, the idol whom he loved supremely.

Thus, while seeing more plainly than Mabel did the obstacles to their union, unlike her he felt no generous ardor to overleap them at a bound. It was true her habits were expensive, but so too were his, and confirmed by long indulgence. The whole of his moderate income was but just sufficient for his selfish wants; was there, then, anything to spare? He knew very well that only by a strenuous and manly exercise of his talents and gifts, only by entering heart and hand into the contest with fortune, could he achieve such a position of usefulness and honor as would bring with it the pecuniary independence which he lacked. And for this he had neither the energy, the will, nor, above all, the faith; faith in his own powers of persevering endeavor, — faith in noble purpose, and in the providence which is sure to reward well directed effort with success.

What! forego his wayward journeyings, desultory studies, and artistic pursuits, and, plunging into the vortex of busy life, task all his powers to win for himself a place among earnest men! His self-indulgent sensitiveness recoiled from the idea. Abandon the refined circles of conventional society,

forego the privilege of intellectual opportunity, and relinquish the luxurious ease of a bachelor's establishment, for the seclusion, the privations, and the every day responsibilities of domestic life! His aristocratic and fastidious nature spurned the thought.

"A few weeks more within the sphere of pretty Mabel's smiles," was his reflection, as whiling away the warm hours of the day, stretched on a couch in an apartment at his club, he lazily watched the blue curling smoke of his cigar — "a journey to the Falls in company with this interesting and beautiful young enthusiast, and then," — he sighed, — for he would have loved Mabel, had there been room in his heart for so disinterested an emotion. "Well — ah, well! each season brings with it its pleasures and its claims. A trip to the Sandwich Islands next, perhaps, — they say the climate is unsurpassed."

Had there been an electric communication between his heart and Mabel's, her airy castles of bliss would have fallen as beneath the lightning blast; but there was no such magnetic link, and she went dreaming on.

She was still occupied with her own glowing and painfully exciting meditations, when her solitude was suddenly broken in upon by one, who of late seldom intruded within her precincts.

It was Harry. He came in, heated with exercise, and there was something of the ease and freedom of his old manner in the unconcerned air with which he stretched himself on his sister's comfortable sofa, and wiped the moisture from his brow.

"It is very warm," said Mabel.

"Confounded hot," replied Harry, taking up the fan Mrs. Vannecker had been using. "I never knew such weather in May before. I believe you 've got the coolest place in the house, though."

There was a pause; the subject of the weather exhausted, this brother and sister, once so confiding, were at a loss for anything to say.

After a few moments, however, Harry broke at once the silence and constraint with the abrupt remark, "So we are to

have a new character in the family." Mabel colored and experienced a nervous tremor; she feared the remark had some reference to herself. She was reässured on this point, however, as Harry continued in a tone of half-playful, half-indignant irony, "Yes, nothing less than a lawyer, — a rusty, fusty lawyer. It is all cut and dried, without the slightest reference to the principal party concerned; old Judge Paradox's office in L. is, I am told, the mint in which I am to be coined into a legal instrument;" and Harry laughed a bitter laugh.

Mabel made no reply to this communication; she felt reluctant to acknowledge to Harry that she had already learned the tidings from her father.

Harry, evidently engaged in some mental process, uttered at intervals an exclamation of angry scorn, then at length gave further vent to his feelings in the sudden outbreak; — "A pretty piece of business! a ridiculous farce! to undertake to treat a man as if he were still a boy! Though a boy, even, if he had any spirit, would object, I think, to being disposed of in this way!"

Mabel now understood that Mr. Vaughan's arrangements had been made without Harry's knowledge, or the slightest reference to his wishes, and her quick mind saw at once the probable consequences of this injudicious step. She knew how vain it was to endeavor thus to control the youth, who never, from his infancy, had submitted to restraint.

As if to give plausibility to the scheme, however, she remarked, — "But, Harry, you always preferred that profession; I always supposed you would decide upon it."

"What if I did," said Harry, sharply. "Is this the season of the year to commence a dry study; and is the atmosphere of L. likely to awaken a man's ambition? No, my father is much mistaken if he thinks I shall put myself under the government of an antediluvian judge, or be tied to the apron strings of two old women. You can take up your residence with the aunties if you choose, and sit between them all day, learning the art of stocking-knitting; but as for me, I can assure you, my imagination takes a higher flight." And as he

finished speaking, he compressed his lips, and threw his head back on the sofa cushions with an air of resolution not to be mistaken.

"But, Harry," exclaimed Mabel, "think how you will disappoint father. I have no doubt his arrangements with his old friend are all completed." Her conscience smote her as she spoke. Was it for her to remind her brother of his duty? Had she not also been included in her father's plans, and had she not in like manner proved refractory?

"Look well to your diplomacy, then," said Harry. "I shall charge you with a commission to his old friend, and trust to you to execute it faithfully. Tell him that the air of his neighborhood does not suit my constitution, — that I feel myself called upon to try a different climate, — that I have a great repugnance to being buried in L. You start next week, I suppose, on your enviable visit?"

"Mine?" asked Mabel, with evident embarrassment. "What, my visit to my aunt Margaret?"

"Certainly; have you not yet been informed of your agreeable destiny?"

"Yes — no," said Mabel with hesitation; "at least, I mean — "

"You don't mean to back out, I hope," said Harry, drawing down the corners of his mouth, and speaking in a tone of mock reproof.

With mortification and difficulty, Mabel faltered out the words, "Why — it happened so, that I was thinking of another journey just at this time, and I concluded that — that — "

"That the air of L. would not suit you," said Harry, with emphasis, and a meaning laugh; and here he precisely echoed her tones of a moment before, — "think how you will disappoint father."

"Oh, but it does not matter so much where I go," said Mabel, anxious to excuse herself.

Harry would listen to no such excuse, however. Her self-indulgence and opposition to their father had, for the present, placed her precisely upon his own level. He rallied her upon

her hypocritical attempt to awaken his filial sentiments, congratulated her upon her escape from parental thraldom, and on the strength of the kindred tie established by their mutual rebellion, so far resumed his brotherly right to her confidence as to inquire into the nature of the trip she had in view, and the expected companions of the journey.

Mabel sketched the plan of the tour, and enumerated the party, closing with the name of Lincoln Dudley

At the last utterance, Harry's only comment was an audible "pshaw!" which Mabel well understood; for she had become instinctively conscious that the friendship once existing between her brother and Dudley had given place to something less than indifference.

Harry had risen from his recumbent posture on the sofa, and stood apparently surveying a picture which hung on the wall, but there was a bitterness in his expression that could scarcely have been called up by the subject represented on the canvas.

"If you don't go to L.," said Mabel, diffidently, and with painful hesitation, "you had better go with us."

"I!" exclaimed Harry, turning upon her almost fiercely — "not I. I certainly should start for L. at once, if joining that party were the only alternative;" and, with these words, he abruptly turned on his heel and left the room.

Once more alone, Mabel would gladly have resumed her castle building — but in vain; flattering visions might dazzle and bewilder her, but she no longer dared unhesitatingly pursue them. There was a something which held her back. Never had the simple voice of duty asserted itself with such force as now. It seemed to whisper in stern and solemn tones, "Child of earth, beware! thy pathway here divides; thou art free to turn either to the right hand or the left, but thou canst not act for thyself alone. Perhaps thy choice may involve thine aged father's peace, and determine the ruin or reformation of thy brother. Mark then, and choose aright."

It haunted her until nightfall. It robbed her of her earlier hours of sleep, it mingled in her later dreams, it greeted her at the morning light, — and still she refused to listen.

CHAPTER XX.

They who have rarest joy, know joy's true measure;
They who most suffer, value sufferings pause;
They who but seldom taste the simplest pleasure,
Kneel oftenest to the Giver and the Cause.

MRS. NORTON.

SUMMER, gentle, balmy summer, had found its way even to the dreary part of the city in which Rosy lived. It came not in bright streams of sunshine, breezes heavily laden with sweets, or the music of gaily singing birds. The close, dark rows of buildings obscured the light, barred out the prospect, and interrupted the refreshing gales, while the harsh and unharmonious noises of the street alone fell on the listening ear. Still Rosy, patiently sitting at her open casement, with a soul alive to its opportunities and a heart grateful to their source, saw more of nature's handiwork, and read in it more of God, than many a dull-eyed, thoughtless traveller who, permitted to rove amid earth's fairest scenes, shuts his eye to their beauty and grandeur, and closes his ear to their sacred influence.

The little tufts of grass which had sprung up at the corners of the opposite archway, had been watched in their growth by Rosy, ever since the first green blade obtruded between the uneven pavement and the foundation stones of the wall. The morning sun, for an hour or more, shone on them with its cheering beams, the afternoon shower refreshed them with its gentle moisture, and day by day the sick child gleaned from this her humble garden plot fresh proofs of the love of Him who watcheth over all. Within the narrow range of her vision, early vegetables and summer fruits were disposed in tempting array, each rivalling the other in its perfection and richness; and every successive luxury of the season, as it appeared in its

turn, awakened in Rosy's heart, loving and grateful thoughts of Him who is the universal and bountiful Provider. The noble team-horses, whose morning exit from the archway she hailed with a daily smile of welcome, seldom now returned at noon or nightfall without a branch of oak, willow, or birch, waving above their heads, while the glow of contentment and self-satisfaction which shone in the young teamster's face, no less than the sprig of lilac which occasionally adorned his hat, proved that he had been engaged in more cheering labors, and among more exhilarating scenes, than those which the city afforded.

The little tufts of grass were all that poor Rosy knew of green fields and verdant waysides; the early vegetables and fruits which she saw, but seldom tasted, furnished her sole experience of summer's wealth and bounty; and the branches which waved over the heads of the heated and weary team-horses, alone afforded proof of the sweet and refreshing repose which might be found beneath the greenwood shade.

But it was something to know, that somewhere beyond the city lay the country, as beyond this world the Heaven of her hopes; and imagination could sun itself in the joys of the one, as the yearning soul could long and pant for the glory, the peace, and the final rest of the other.

As she watched the grass grow beneath the archway, in the sweet dreams of fancy her crippled form strayed among verdant fields and sat down by rippling streams; as she surveyed the tempting display in the green-grocer's shop, she tasted, by means of some inward sense, rich fruits whose names she scarcely knew; as the gentle breeze waved the green boughs above the horses' heads, she seemed to hear the soft sighing of the summer wind as it swept through the arches of a boundless forest. And when, to crown her satisfaction, the ruddy, laughing teamster gaily lifted his hat, removed the lilac branch from its crown, and flung the cluster of purple flowers into the lap of the pleased, astonished child, Cerës herself, with all her treasures, was not more richly laden.

But summer, among its precious gifts, has brought no glow

of health to the cheek, no renewal of strength to the limbs of the wasted girl. The close confinement of the long winter had left her more enfeebled than ever; the rough winds of the early spring had rudely pierced to the seat of her fragile life; and now, the sudden heat which has succeeded serves only to enervate still further her sunken and perishing frame. Cheerfully, serenely, hopefully as ever, the calm blue eyes are searching with their earnest, steadfast gaze, into the things which are not but are soon to be;—looking into the depths of that future, no longer distant, but seemingly close at hand. Like the pilgrim who, after long wanderings, arrives at last without the walls of the promised city, and is anxious only for the morning light which shall admit him within its gates, so she, standing at Heaven's portal, seems only to await the dawn which shall usher her in.

The widow Hope moves about her little domain with the same measured, dragging step as ever, presides at her narrow counter, and displays her humble wares with the same mechanical, half-vacant air, and betrays in her demeanor a rigid, unaltered apathy of grief and disappointment. Now and then, however, her dull eye is fixed upon her child with a deep, searching glance of maternal anxiety and dread, and as she turns away and engages in some household task, a deep-drawn sigh, or half-uttered groan, gives evidence that the poor heart's capacity for suffering is not exhausted yet.

Nor is the remembrance of past happiness effaced beyond recall. The softness of the summer air, the sight of Rosy's lilac branch, the well-known perfume of its flowers,—all serve to awaken within her the recollection of days gone by. She lifts the broken-handled mug which contains the fragrant blossoms, and, as she inhales their familiar breath, a vision rises before her of her childhood's home,—the green and sloping meadow which stretched before the door, the old stone step, worn smooth by childish feet, the lilac bushes which graced it on either side, and the robins which yearly built their nests and sang there. She hears her brothers and sisters at their play, her mother's step within the house, her father's voice

outside, and the voice of Rosy's father whispering in her ear. It might be sad to muse on joys forever flown, but, if so, it was a pleasing sadness, for again and again she bends her care-worn head over the rustic nosegay, reads in it a record of her girlhood, and turns away to muse upon the page.

"O Rose!" exclaimed she, as her thoughts, after straying awhile amid the past, led her back to the stern reality of the present, "O Rose! how I wish you could go up to the old farm, if it were only for a week; your uncle Jonas would be glad to have you come, I know, and the very sight of the place would do you good!" And as the poor mother reflected on the impossibility of carrying this wish into effect, she drew the deepest sigh that had escaped her yet.

Rose sighed, too—a soft, low, scarcely audible sigh. If the poor child had a selfish wish on earth, it was to visit the old farm.

The same bright morning which bore witness to the widow's heart-sick despondency, and the hopelessness of Rose's earthly longings, found the fashionable world of New York elated and eager in the prospect of a festive occasion, which promised to be as brilliant and successful as it was exciting and novel. It was the day of Fan Broadhead's marriage with the Colonel, and after the nuptial ceremony at Grace church, the bridal party were to proceed to the bridegroom's country residence, a few miles up the Hudson, where a grand reception of guests was to be held in the open air; the beautiful grounds belonging to the estate having been decorated and prepared in a style rarely attempted in our fickle and unpropitious climate. Everything, therefore, depended on the weather; and if sunshine and gentle breezes could have been propitiated or bribed, a more perfect day could not have cheered the hearts of the numerous aspirants after pleasure. Hair-dressers and ladies-maids were called into requisition at day-break; spring bonnets, whose exquisite array of buds and flowers had been carefully secreted until now, bloomed out of their various band-boxes; the flounces of rich silks rustled and rattled as if asserting their rival merits; and white-gloved coachmen, mounted on the boxes of freshly-

varnished carriages, surveyed their own stately equipages with pride, and bestowed disparaging glances on those of their masters' neighbors.

And now, one after another, these showy establishments, decked like their occupants in all the panoply of pride, rolled in various directions from street to street, and finally swept up the wide avenue leading from the city, bearing with them the beauty, the wealth, and the fashion of the metropolis.

"Mabel, what in the world can have become of Donald?" exclaimed Mrs. Leroy, in an agony of impatience;—a state of mind which was not improved by a sudden rent in her delicate glove, the consequence of an angry twitch on the part of the irritated lady.

"I can not imagine," replied Mabel, outwardly more calm than her sister, but betraying scarcely less annoyance, as she glanced at a clock on the mantle-piece, and then looked anxiously down the street.

"We shall be too late," said Louise, in a reproachful tone; "every body has driven by. I wish I had gone by myself. Donald is always behind the time."

Mabel made no reply, but continued gazing from the window, not a little chafed at the selfishness of her sister's complaints.

This unforeseen delay and disappointment were the result of a discovery made by Mabel's coachman, as she alighted at the hotel where she had, according to agreement, called for Mrs. Leroy. One of the wheels of the new barouche, a recent birth-day gift from her father, was imperfectly adjusted, and Donald declared it impossible to take the anticipated drive until the difficulty was remedied. He was suffered to depart, therefore, for this purpose, upon the assurance that he should be absent half an hour only, at the most.

The time was long past, however, and still he did not return. Mrs. Leroy's childish and fretful impatience increased every moment; and Mabel, in addition to her own share of vexation, found herself the victim of Louise's uncontrollable ill temper and unsparing invective. She should not have suffered Donald

out of her sight for a moment on such an important oc
faithless creature that he was. Or, at least, why did she n
tell him to bring the close carriage instead of the barouche?
he could have made the exchange in half the time that he had
kept them waiting—it would have been better to go in that
stifled thing than not to go at all. It was no more than fair
that Mabel should abide by her own poor management, but it
was hard—yes, she must say it was a little too hard—that
she also should be the sufferer by such folly. And angrily
calling to Lydia to bring her a fresh pair of gloves, and harshly
repulsing Murray, who accidentally trod on one end of her lace
mantilla, she threw herself into a seat in a despairing attitude,
and pouted and sulked for some minutes like a spoiled child.

"Hark!" exclaimed she at length. "Is n't that Mr. Earle's
voice? Yes, it certainly is; he was to call here for young
Van Rosberg, and Van Rosberg is gone. He was invited to
act as groomsman, and went early with the bridal party." And
the next moment her light figure disappeared through the door
which opened into the hall, and Mabel lost her final words,
which were to the effect that there would probably then be a
vacant seat in Mr. Earle's carriage. "How fortunate if it
were so!"

A moment after, a waiter appeared at the drawing-room door,
to say that Mrs. Leroy had gone to Riverside with Mrs. Earle,
and hoped Miss Vaughan would be in season to overtake them
on the road.

Characteristic as this manœuvre was in Mrs. Leroy, Mabel's
feelings were deeply hurt at the selfishness and unsisterly
effrontery which it evinced. "I can not go now, at any
rate," thought she. "Louise knew very well that I should
give it up altogether if she deserted me in this way." And no
longer anxious for the arrival of the carriage, she deliberately
removed her bonnet and sat down to meditate on her disap-
pointment.

Unconsciously to herself, she had looked forward to this fes-
tivity with an interest never before awakened by any similar
occasion. Not because the bride and bridegroom were at the

height of fashion; not because all the world would be present to do them honor; nor because it would be for her a new opportunity to achieve conquests and triumphs: such motives and reflections had given no glow to her anticipations, and now added no sting to her disappointment. The simple thought of her heart had been, "Dudley is the bridegroom's nephew; Dudley will be there. I shall read my triumph in his presence, and achieve in his approving smile the only conquest that I crave."

Perhaps, too, though she knew it not, her secret soul looked to him to exorcise with his eye, his voice, his smile, the spirits of disquiet and self-questioning which had for the last few days warred constantly with her peace; perhaps she trusted to his magnetic influence to hush the voice of warning, make a treaty with her conscience, and reconcile her to herself.

How aggravating, then, the loss of this opportunity, the only one she could possibly expect before starting on her journey, it being Dudley's well-known purpose to accompany the bridal party to Albany, where other festivities awaited them, and join the excursionists on their arrival at that city, which was to be the first point on their route.

Whatever hopes she might have based on this long-anticipated occasion, she now found them suddenly annihilated, and herself oppressed with a painful sense of loneliness, injustice, and injury. She would have given vent to her feelings in a burst of tears, but for the presence of her sister's children, who, while they acted as a restraint upon her, evinced at the same time a childlike sympathy in her disappointment, which touched and soothed her sensitive nature.

"Has mother gone without you, auntie?" exclaimed Alick; "that's real mean!" while Murray, climbing into a chair, stretched his head out of the window and made, every instant, eager but, as it proved, false reports of the arrival of the carriage.

"Never mind, Murray, I sha'n't go now," said Mabel, after nearly an hour had elapsed; "it is too late."

"Oh, here it is, really," shouted Murray, "I see Donald driving like any thing! Oh, what a splendid barouche!" and

Alick, convinced that this time his brother's announcement was to be relied upon, ran to the window and confirmed the joyful fact, by joining in Murray's panegyric upon the gay and beautiful equipage.

"Are n't you going, after all?" inquired he, in a disappointed tone, observing that Mabel was standing behind him, gazing moodily and vacantly into the street, and making no movement to resume her bonnet.

"No, Alick."

The boy hung down his head, as if a veto had been put upon some favorite scheme of his own, but Murray, conceiving a new idea, cried out, eagerly, "Then, auntie, take me to ride. Oh, do, take me a little way in the new barouche."

"Very well," said Mabel, indifferently; "ask Lydia for your hat, — get yours, too, Alick," and pleased at the delight exhibited by Murray, she tried to assume a gay tone, as she said, —"We will go and have a good time by ourselves."

Alick's face brightened, as Mabel seemed thus to promise herself a compensation for being excluded from the wedding festival, and by the time they gained the carriage, the boys, at least, were both in high spirits.

Donald, comprehending at once the consequences of his long delay, had a tedious story to relate in reference to its cause; but Mabel, scarcely hearing his explanation, and caring little for the trivial details which had resulted, as she deemed, so disastrously, accepted his apology in silence, and bade him drive on, purposely choosing a direction opposite to that leading to Riverside.

They had proceeded but a little distance down Broadway, however, when, seized with a new idea, she suddenly altered her purpose, and requested the coachman to turn and drive home. Alick looked at her inquiringly; Murray began to whimper; but her smile re-assured them. "Only for a moment, darling," said she, in a soothing tone, to Murray; "I shall not get out of the carriage, I wish to speak to Cecilia. Ring the bell, Donald," said she, as they stopped before her father's door; and as the footman appeared and ran down the steps to

take her orders, she exclaimed, to the astonishment of her hearers, "ask Cecilia to bring my warm Scotch shawl and a pillow — two pillows, Robert," continued she, as he turned to fulfil her directions.

The smiling Cecilia soon appeared with the articles, which were deposited in the carriage.

"Are we going to be gone all night?" asked Murray, in some alarm, while Alick's face contained a volume of questions.

But Mabel only smiled in reply.

"Turn here," said she, at length, to Donald, as they reached the entrance of a narrow street.

"Oh! I know, I know!" shouted the usually quiet Alick, as he observed that they were taking the direction leading to the widow Hope's, "you are going to take Rosy out to drive."

Mabel nodded in assent.

Murray sprang up and down on the carriage seat, and clapped his hands in an extasy of delight.

Alick scanned his aunt's face pensively, admiringly. Mabel almost forgot her recent and bitter disappointment, in the thought of the pleasure she was about to impart.

But who shall paint the rapture of surprise, excitement, and delight, which reigned in the widow's home, when the prancing horses were reined in before the door, when the object of their coming was announced, and the thoughtful preparations for the little invalid's comfort placed the incredible fact beyond a doubt. Tears streamed down the cheeks of the happy, grateful child, and the undemonstrative mother so far forgot her wonted reserve as to lay her hand on Mabel's shoulder and exclaim, "Bless your heart, she was just longing to have a peep at the country! Why, it will be like taking her to paradise!"

A few moments more, and Rose, supported by pillows, and with Mabel's shawl across her lap, was rolling down Broadway, in the easy, luxurious carriage, her thin, pale face, and slight, attenuated figure, forming a striking contrast to the rich beauty and graceful proportions of Mabel, who was leaning forward, re-arranging the cushions at her feet, and gently inquiring

whether the motion of the carriage fatigued her. Rose's eyes wandered up and down the street, taking in at a glance a thousand interesting objects, while Alick and Murray, as they watched her from the opposite seat, directed her attention now to one thing and now to another, betraying in their animated faces how deeply they enjoyed and participated in her pleasure.

But city sights and sounds were comparatively familiar to Rosy, and although the drive was enlarging her knowledge and experience, nothing as yet had served to arouse emotions altogether unprecedented and novel. As they approached the battery, however, and through the arches of its lofty elms she caught sight of the deep blue waters of the bay, the white sails glistening in the sun, and the green islands beyond, her large eyes dilated, her little form seemed to expand and elevate itself, her breast heaved, she clasped her thin transparent hands, and uttered a long-drawn exclamation of wonder, reverence, and awe. Mabel and the boys gazed in silent satisfaction at the rapt and excited child, as, lost in the contemplation of this panorama of ocean, earth, and sky, she manifested in her face and gestures an extasy of delight such as words would have been powerless to express.

With parted lips and straining eyes she continued to gaze, as if every other sense was absorbed in that of sight, and not until some overshadowing buildings shut out the bewildering prospect, did she relapse into her wonted composure. As the carriage paused a moment at the ferry, while awaiting the boat which should transport it to the opposite shore, the child slowly turned her head, met Mabel's sympathetic glance, drew a long breath, and, with a smile of holy joy, sought the hand of her friend and pressed it with grateful fervor. Still she spoke not a word, as if fearful to break the spell that was upon her, but with patient though trembling expectation, waited until the revelation of beauty and enchantment should again burst upon her sight.

A moment more and they were launched upon the transparent waters of the bay, where, with nothing to interrupt the vision or disturb the harmony of the scene, the eye might rove

at will in all directions, and sweep to the very verge of the distant horizon. With her head bent forward, the light breeze stirring the hair on her blue-veined temples, and her cheek tinged with the faint flush which pleasure and excitement had called up, the invalid girl seemed borne into a new creation and animated by a new life. As if some earth-born mortal had strayed beyond its native sphere, and stood with bounding pulse on the threshold of a higher existence, so this suffering child, emerging from the darkness, seclusion, and obscurity in which her life had hitherto been shrouded, seemed to rejoice, expand, and glow, as if in the presence of Deity.

Nor were her emotions unshared by her companions. Mabel's heart beat high with unselfish joy, as she beheld the light which sparkled in Rose's eye, and the rapture which shone in her beaming features; while Alick forgot his wonted interest in the shipping of the harbor, to follow her earnest gaze as it peered now into the azure depths of sky, then watched the motion of the rolling waves, and finally rested with serene repose on the luxurious verdure of the shore. Even Murray now and then threw himself on the carriage floor at her feet, looked up, and reading her pleasure in her face, exclaimed, "Rosy likes it, do n't you Rosy?" to which Rose responded with a smile so expressive that the little questioner comprehended its meaning and was satisfied.

Nor were these the only friends destined to sympathize in her enjoyment this day. Scarcely had they gained the streets of New York's sister city, when a familiar rumble greeted Rose's ear, and coming towards them from the opposite direction, she saw the well-known cart horses which she had that morning hailed as they came through the arch-way. Never had the brazen knobs of the harness glittered as now in the afternoon sunlight, never had the cart seemed of so deep a blue, never had the young teamster's face worn so astonished an expression, so joyous and cheering a glow, as that with which he now saw and recognized his little invalid neighbor. With one glance of his quick eye, he took in the whole establishment, the spirited horses, their showy accoutrements, the

beautiful carriage, its pleasure-bound occupants, and Rose preëminent in their midst. It was too much for his equanimity. As he passed, he laughed, cracked his long whip, took off his hat, swung it round his head three times, and then gracefully kissed his hand to her in tokon of congratulation.

This gay and exultant salutation exerted a corresponding effect upon the spirits of the little party. The boys became quite excited in view of it; and Rose, to whose satisfaction this little incident had imparted additional zest, leaned out of the carriage and waved her hand in triumphal glee.

"He knows you! he is looking back after you! he is glad you are taking a ride!" cried the voices of Alick and Murray, while Mabel herself could not resist turning round for another glimpse of the honest face, which evinced such an evident participation in Rose's joy.

Truly this was a great day for Rose, — the one gala day of her life. Not only nature, but the heart of man, seemed to rejoice and sympathize in the occasion. Even Donald, that proud, handsome Donald, who presided on the box, manifested a certain tenderness for her infirmities, drove gently over the pavement, and avoided every rough spot in the road, as if to spare her any unnecessary jolting or fatigue.

And now they gradually left the city behind them, and struck out into the open country. Green fields and smiling gardens met them at every turn; sweeping elms overarched the roads and refreshed them with their shade; birds flitted among the branches, and flowering shrubs rejoiced the senses with their perfume. Here and there, at intervals, might be seen the neat Dutch farm-houses, each of which seemed in turn, to Rose, the counterpart of her mother's early home, while, occasionally, as they gained some slight elevation, there burst upon them in one comprehensive view the wide range of rolling meadows, green orchards, and sunny slopes, which mark the scenery of Long Island; while in the distance, the eye might discern, at intervals, the blue waters of the sea.

At sight of the rural homesteads, the cattle peacefully grazing, or reposing in the shade, and innumerable other objects

with which frequent descriptions had rendered Rose partially familiar, her enthusiastic and artless delight would find vent in words; and Mabel's heart was deeply touched as the child recounted, in simple phrase, the oft-repeated tale of her mother's happy life at the old farm, the revisiting of which blessed spot had ever constituted the day-dream of her city-bred children.

"You must go there, Rose!" exclaimed Mabel, eagerly, as she observed the child's intense and ill-concealed longing; "you must go there with your mother one of these days, and see the good old place."

Rose only replied, however, by shaking her head with an air of sad and pensive resignation and Mabel forbore to urge the point, for they had now gained the height of a hill up which the horses had long been toiling, and were greeted by one of those lovely and extensive views, the sight of which effectually sealed Rose's lips, while a hush of holy awe crept over the little face, the working of which, nevertheless, revealed unutterable things. Who shall tell how much she discerned which is shut from the eye of sense, how much she heard which is whispered only to the ear of the spirit?

The happiness of Alick and Murray was only secondary on this occasion to that of Rose. Like her, they were privileged beyond their wont, and evinced their satisfaction, the one in the eagerness of his observations and questions, and the other in the laughter, shouts, and unchecked glee of childhood. Now and then, at some shady point in the road, or some pleasant opening in the prospect, the horses were drawn up for a few moments, and the boys were suffered to alight, to challenge each other to a run, or to pluck the wild flowers by the roadside, with which they playfully showered their indulgent aunt and her happy little companion.

Occasionally Mabel's thoughts would wander to the gay scene at Riverside; a slight pang of envy would pierce her heart as she mused upon the happy throng assembled there, and she would anxiously ask herself, "Am I missed amid the crowd?" But a look at Rose's enraptured face, or the shouts of the joyous boys, were sufficient to chase away every obtrud-

ing regret, and satisfy her with the reflection, "They surely could not spare me here."

But time is a tyrant, and though Mabel had left her watch at home, the slowly descending sun began to give notice of the day's decline. In spite of innumerable pauses and delays, they had more than half completed the circuit appointed for their afternoon's excursion, and were already homeward bound. Alick and Murray were somewhat weary with unusual exercise, and a quiet, placid sense of enjoyment had crept over the little party to the exclusion of conversation and merriment. The road, following the undulations of the bay, now and then swept close to the shore, on whose pebbly margin the light waves broke with a soft and pleasant murmur, and all nature wore that air of repose which marks the close of a summer's day. Reclining on her cushions, with her head gently resting on Mabel's shoulder, Rose lay watching the light, airy clouds, which, gradually forming into masses of greater volume and richer coloring, hung suspended above the western horizon. So soft and soothing was the scene, so still and motionless the figure of the child, who was revolving in new wonder the miracle of creation, that Mabel believed and hoped she had fallen asleep, and forbore to disturb her by a word. As a sudden turn in the road, however, brought them in full view of the city, Rose raised her head, and, like one abruptly awakened from a pleasant dream, gazed long and fixedly at the huge assemblage of buildings, amid which her young life had hitherto been imprisoned.

Mabel divined her thoughts. "New York is but a poor place compared with the country, is it, Rosy?" asked she.

Rose smiled and shook her head.

"I have thought of a fine plan for you," continued Mabel, "and one that I am sure you will like. You and your mother, Rose, must go up to the old farm and stay until you get strong and well. There you can see plenty of woods, and fields, and wild flowers, and watch the sun set every night. It is not a long journey," added she, with animation, her interest in the scheme increasing as she observed the ray of pleasure and

hope which had overspread Rose's face at the suggestion, "it will only take one day. I will see that it is no expense to you, and Jack will stay at home and take care of the house and shop. We will talk it over with your mother this very evening."

The glow of delight which had been called up in Rose's countenance, as Mabel first named this welcome proposal, gave place to an expression of pain and anxiety as she pronounced the concluding phrases of the plan. Tears started into her eyes, and she made haste to lay her hand on Mabel's arm, and check the glowing anticipations she was indulging of her little friend's happiness and possible restoration to health, in the broken words, "Dear Miss Mabel! you are very good, but do n't mention it to mother, — please do n't; I can 't go, — indeed I can 't!"

"But why not, Rose? you feel strong enough for the journey? you will go if your mother consents?"

"Yes, — no, — please do n't ask her, — indeed I had far rather stay in New York."

Mabel looked puzzled and disappointed; she could not understand the child's eagerness to deny herself so great a pleasure.

"Miss Mabel," added Rose, after a little hesitation, seeing that Mabel still awaited an explanation, "you would n't think anybody needed me here, a poor sick girl that has been a care and a trouble all my life, but I could not be happy to go away and leave my dear Jack. Miss Mabel, he is a rough boy, perhaps, but he is never rough to me. Lyddy says he has learned wicked words, but he uses good words to me; they tell me he loves bad company, but I know that he loves his little Rose. He has sat up all night to bathe my aching head, — he has carried me in his arms all day. He would miss me from my little room; the bad boys would whistle round the corner, and there would be no little voice to say, 'Oh, Jack! stay with Rosy!'"

Innocent, artless Rose! Little did she think that every word of her simple apology pierced like an arrow to the heart of

Mabel; little did she comprehend the sudden sting of conscience which caused the quick blush to flood the face, the eyes to droop, and the hand to be nervously withdrawn from her fond and affectionate clasp. She thought she had offended her friend, and continued in urgent tones, "indeed—indeed, I am very thankful, and you are too good; I do not deserve it; but you are not vexed with me?" And laying her hand on Mabel's arm, and fixing her large eyes full and searchingly upon her, she added, in a touching, pleading tone, "O, dear Miss Mabel, have you a brother, and do you love him as I love Jack?"

The look, the question seemed empowered with authority to probe Mabel's very heart. Shrinking from their scrutiny, she sought to evade the one and respond to the other by hiding her face in the folds of Rosy's shawl, as she drew her to her in a close embrace; and Rose believed herself understood and was satisfied.

And now they have bid farewell to the blue waters of the bay, the verdant islands, the sky still glowing with the lingering rays of crimson light, and once more are dashing through the city thoroughfares, crowded with vehicles and ringing with bewildering sounds. Many an eye follows them with loving and grateful interest, as they sweep down the narrow street, where, at her humble door, the widow Hope watches for the return of her child. All the neighborhood has missed her, has learned her whereabouts, and is sympathizing in her joy. The mother greets her with an eager smile; the old woman over the way hobbles to the door, doubting her very eyes, and adjusting her spectacles to be sure that she sees aright. The little deaf and dumb boy stands braced against the side of the house, transfixed in mute astonishment; and, as the restive horses, panting for their stable, require the restraining hand of Donald, the brisk, young teamster makes his appearance from beneath the archway, hastens to the carriage, lifts Rose gently in his arms, bears her into the house, and places her in her arm-chair. She looks up, smiles at Mabel and the boys, receives answering smiles in return, and the carriage whirls rapidly away.

Many a noble steed has that day returned to the city heated, dusty, and jaded. But how many of their gay and fashionable owners have been engaged in a like labor of love? Certain it is, that in after years, and amid other scenes, memory could recall no festive occasion in the annals of the New York belle so blessed in its simple pleasures, so hallowed in its lasting results, as that which constituted to little Rose Hope the one bright spot on this side Heaven.

CHAPTER XXI.

She hath put on
Courage, and faith, and generous constancy,
Ev'n as a breastplate.

Mrs. Hemans.

"Well, I believe I have told you all that is of any consequence, all that is worth telling. It was a fine affair! I would not but have been there for the world." Thus exclaimed the unabashed Louise, who, adopting her usual tactics, and ignoring any unsisterly conduct on her own part, had, with many affected airs and a more than ordinary toss of the head, detailed for Mabel's benefit such particulars of the wedding reception as seemed to her most noteworthy. As these consisted chiefly of the compliments paid to herself on the occasion, the attention she had received from various quarters, the admiration and envy her new mantilla had excited, and the striking contrast between the awkward arrangement of Fan Brodhead's veil and the taste displayed on the event of her own bridal, it may well be supposed that Mabel's interest in the subject was soon exhausted, especially as Louise declared that she had a thousand messages of regret from her sister's numerous friends, but could not remember a word of them, or say exactly who inquired for her, and who did not. "But, mercy! I did not come here to talk about the wedding," exclaimed Louise. "Tired as I am, and with so much to think about, only conceive of my being plagued to death as usual by that provoking Lydia! To think of her declaring now, at this last minute, that she had never had any idea of staying in my service after last month was out, and that she supposed I had got some one else to go with me on the journey!".

"Had n't she given you any notice?" asked Mabel, in surprise.

"Oh, yes; she says she has told me several times that she could not go so far away, and I dare say she has, but I never believed her; servants are always threatening in that sort of way, just to show their consequence. She says her sister is failing very fast; her mother needs her, and so on."

"It is very true," replied Mabel, gravely. "Rose can not live long; I do not wonder Lydia does not like to leave her."

"Rose!" exclaimed Louise, sneeringly. "You speak her name with as much familiarity as if she were an intimate acquaintance! I heard about your taking her out to drive yesterday; my children are full of it. I can't conceive of your doing anything so ridiculous."

Mabel made no reply; she had learned by experience that it was vain to argue with Louise.

"That child," added the latter, in a provoked tone, as if Rose had intentionally done her a serious injury; "has been dying ever since Lydia lived with me; if she is really going to die now, Lydia can't keep her alive; and what difference does it make whether she's here, or in some other part of the country?"

Mabel looked deeply shocked at her sister's heartlessness, and answered, "A very great difference I should think, Louise."

The temper of Mrs. Leroy, however, becoming more excited, as she saw how little her sister sympathized in her view of the matter, now burst forth with redoubled vehemence; she did not believe in the child's illness; it was all counterfeited; Lydia was the most ungrateful of mortals, and Mabel was silly enough to be the dupe of this miserable family's impositions. She could not conceive of her being so indifferent to the welfare of the boys, of whom she professed to be so fond; poor children, they were accustomed to Lydia; how would they like being away from home, and travelling too, under the care of a perfect stranger?

This appeal was irresistible to Mabel, and, with prompt generosity, she exclaimed, without a moment's hesitation, "take Cecilia, Louise. I can spare her. I can do without any maid; she is a good girl, and is used to the boys."

Mrs. Leroy walked to the window, to hide her satisfaction at

this proposition. It was the point at which all her diplomacy had been directed, for, however Cecilia might supply Lydia's place to the children, her skill as lady's maid and hair-dresser was such that her services had long been coveted by the mother.

Unwilling, however, to acknowledge her obligation to her sister, she continued to make an excessive show of annoyance; declared Cecilia to be wanting in every quality requisite in one who was to fill Lydia's place, and finally ended by saying, in a condescending tone, that if the latter persisted in leaving, and she could not do better, which it was not very probable she could at this late hour, she would try and be satisfied with Cecilia, and should be glad at all events to have her come to the hotel for a while, and assist in packing her trunks.

The consequence was, that in less than an hour after Mrs. Leroy reached home, a messenger was dispatched for Cecilia, requesting that she should come to the hotel without delay, and Mabel, thus unceremoniously deprived of her skilful attendant, was left to complete those personal preparations for travelling which had unexpectedly devolved upon her.

It was night, and she was alone in her quiet room. Her mind was troubled; and inwardly congratulating herself on the absence of her maid, whose presence would have been a restraint, she was, with alternate listlessness and feverish energy, engaged in packing for the morrow's journey. Various articles of her wardrobe were spread out upon the bed. She folded a rich dress with care, as if to place it in the trunk, then, forgetful of her purpose, laid it away on the closet shelf. Now she hastily opened and shut her drawers and caskets, then withdrew to the window, and leaning her head on her hand looked out into the moonlight. The tempter, though absent from her side, was present to her thoughts; but ever as her heart dwelt fondly on his last persuasive words, there came between her and his treacherous image, the form of her better angel, the sick and saintly Rose, whose mild, searching eyes seemed to follow her with a reproachful glance, whose little hand seemed lifted in timid yet fervent appeal, and whose low, childlike voice was continually whispering in her ear the simple words, "Miss

Mabel, have you a brother, and do you love him as I love Jack?"

Her heart told her that she had not loved him thus, and she felt humbled at the contrast between her own shrinking, doubtful spirit, and the child's unhesitating generosity. She pressed her throbbing head against the cool glass, and while she meditated on the pleasures of the morrow, strove to shut out every thought that preyed upon her peace. But conscience was aroused and would not be thus easily silenced, and the necessary preparation for the journey was forgotten, while her heart struggled with contending emotions.

Just then quick steps were heard in the street below, and, as they drew nearer, voices also were distinguishable. Mabel held her breath to listen, for she recognized the familiar tones of Harry, who paused at the street door, and seemed to be bidding adieu to one of his companions.

"Family all going out of town! House going to be shut up. Ah!" exclaimed the voice of a strange individual, in reply to a remark from Harry, the words of which had escaped her ear. "And you, Vaughan, what is to become of you? Where are you bound for the summer? Come, I'll play your cicerone," continued the person, in a course and yet insinuating tone, "I'll back you up for any place you'll name."

"You may well say that," replied Harry, in a tone of bitter irony; "I'm going to the devil, as you very well know, but I'll warrant you'll keep me company;" and the unhappy youth accompanied this desperate acknowledgment with a hollow and joyless laugh, which was loudly and boisterously echoed by his companion, who, as Harry abruptly entered the house, proceeded down the street.

Bitter as were Harry's words of despairing self-abandonment, his mocking laugh was more bitter still. It thrilled through every fibre of Mabel's frame. It seemed to ring out the knell of hope, and fix a seal to his impending doom. And yet it was so indescribably sad, so heart-rending in its mournful significance, — it told such a story of vain struggles, use-

less regrets, and final desperation. It was like the cry of a fallen spirit, which sneeringly derides itself.

All the tender compassion of Mabel's nature was aroused — "My poor brother! my poor Harry!" was her mental exclamation, — "is there no good angel to save him yet?"

She listened to his heavy and measured steps, as, after parting with his evil associate, he came slowly up the staircase; he paused a moment at her door; she thought he meant to enter, and bid her farewell, for he knew she was to depart early on the morrow; but no, — he passed on and ascended the next flight to his own chamber, which he entered, and closed the door.

"I cannot leave him thus," thought Mabel, as she pictured him to herself, alone, ruined, uncared for; and yielding to a sudden and tender impulse, she resolved to seek him, speak an affectionate word, and assure him of her love.

She feared to knock at his door, lest she should be repulsed, or dismissed with a hasty good-bye; so, gently opening it, she presented herself unexpectedly before him. He was pacing restlessly up and down the room, — seemed almost angry at being intruded upon, as if he suspected that she had come to pry into his secret thoughts, and turning upon her with an abrupt, imperative air, appeared to demand the object of her errand.

"Harry," said she, her lip trembling with the effort to speak in a natural tone of voice, "I could not bear to go away without bidding you good-bye;" she passed her arm, coaxingly, through his as she spoke, and accompanied him for a few steps in his walk up and down the room.

With his face now obstinately turned from her, he answered only in the brief words, "Are you going early in the morning?"

"Yes, and I was afraid you would not be up in season to see me off; but you will write to me, won't you, Harry?"

"I sha' n't know where you are," he replied curtly.

"I will write, and tell you where to direct."

Still he did not promise.

"I shall have no one else to write to me; father will be away, and I have always depended on you, Harry," added she, in a tone calculated to impress him with the value she should place upon his letters.

"Poh!" exclaimed he, with a slight nervous jerk, which was sufficient to induce her to let go his arm "I shall have nothing worth telling, — you'll have plenty of better entertainment."

"Where shall you be?" she asked timidly.

"I? I don't know, I'm sure. I have not made up my mind."

She found it hard to press the subject further, he was so short in his answers. She walked to the window and looked out, then strayed to the bureau and occupied herself in examining the trinkets which lay upon it, hoping Harry would broach some topic of mutual interest, but he remained perseveringly silent. She would gladly have drawn near, thrown her arms round his neck, and entreated his confidence, his renewed affection at parting, but he gave her no encouragement. "It is late, I suppose," said she at length, seeing that he appeared surprised, if not impatient, at her lingering. "So good-bye, Harry," and approaching him, she laid her hand on his shoulder.

He started as if her touch pained him. She looked in his face earnestly, imploringly; his features twitched, and there was a nervous embarrassment in his manner as, studiously avoiding her eye, he stooped down, returned her parting kiss, and responded to her good-bye.

With hurried and tremulous step Mabel hastened back to her room, threw herself on a low seat opposite the empty trunk, and burst into tears. She had sought her brother with a view to appeasing her overcharged feelings, and defraying a debt to her conscience, but neither purpose had been effected by the brief and unsatisfactory interview.

She had found him in a desperate mood, — she had read in his face the mental torture under which he writhed, — she had failed to break down the barrier between her own heart

and his, and with little more than a mechanical farewell she had turned her back upon his misery.

Should she leave him thus, abandoned by his sister as well as by his better self?

The deep and almost hysterical sobs which escaped her, proved that the struggle of contending feelings had now reached its height, and for some minutes she wept as children weep, without any effort at self-control. As this storm of grief subsided, and she sat for a while maintaining an inward war, but apparently gazing into vacancy, she stretched forth her hand with an absent air and raised the inner lid of her trunk. As she did so she caught sight of a little package lying in a corner, directed to herself, in the familiar handwriting of Mrs. Herbert. It had been placed there when she left school, and, by Cecilia's carelessness, had remained undiscovered until now. Almost believing it to be a message of counsel and advice from that friend who had always come to her aid in moments when she was at a loss for guidance, she hastily tore off the wrapper, and found it to contain a little pocket bible. Touched by this proof of affection, and by the nature of the gift, she opened the book, with reverence, at the first epistle of St. John, where a slip of paper was inserted, and her eye at once fell on the words, carefully marked, as if to attract her attention: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Awed by the solemn charge, which she realized to be armed with divine authority, Mabel bowed her head upon the lid of her trunk, and, with the volume clasped in her hands, sunk upon her knees.

Now rose before her that long forgotten scene in her childhood, when first Mrs. Herbert had striven to impress upon her this great lesson. How vividly still did memory recall that last evening of her school life, when her faithful teacher had bid her beware of that insidious foe, whose existence in her heart she had so proudly denied, — that demon of self-love, which undermines the holiest affections and enslaves the corrupted soul.

She could no longer deceive herself; with all her enlarged opportunities, with all her self-confidence and pride, with all her boasted love for Harry, she felt that she had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, — that she had been outdone in generosity by a feeble, invalid child, — that she had not loved like Rosy.

Contrite, humbled, eager to be enlightened in the path of duty, she lifted her bowed head and again opened the inspired book; but this time her eyes fell on the words, "For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

As if suddenly, and for the first time in her life, made conscious of the invisible presence of Him to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, she now ceased to wrestle with herself, and looking up for the help she so earnestly craved, she poured out her soul in prayer. The form, the attitude, the words of devotion, if not habitual, were at least not new to one who had been a member of a religious household, and shared the benefits of religious instruction. But never before had she come, in all the submission of a child, to lay before God's throne the sincere offering of a humble, contrite heart; never before had she approached in that spirit of self-consecration which cries out, "Thy will, not mine, be done."

And with prayer came strength. She rose from her knees armed with a Christian resolution, and fortified with a Christian hope; the resolution to meet evil face to face; the hope to triumph at length over sin. It was not her own sin only that she was thus to combat; for in that hour of high communing she had dedicated herself to a sacred cause, and charged herself with a solemn trust. Not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth, would she prove a sister's devotion, and labor for a brother's welfare. With her watchword, duty, and her banner, love, she would place herself boldly at Harry's side, and, with the blessing of God, prove herself the good angel who would save him yet.

It was with no blind zeal, no inconsiderate impulse, that she had thus set herself to the fulfilment of her heaven-

appointed mission. She had thoroughly measured and fully understood the sacrifice it would involve. She knew that, in consecrating herself to duty and to God, she must dethrone her young heart's earthly idol; that the selfish love must yield to the purely disinterested, the human to the divine. Had it been otherwise, she would not so long have been deaf to the call which summoned her to her Master's service.

Beguiled by a persuasive intellect, enthralled by the power of genius, and a willing captive in the chains which flattery so well knows how to forge, she had wandered awhile through the flowery fields of pleasure, had reached the pinnacle of her ambition, had sunned herself in dreams of future bliss; but there came a time when the simple words of an infant tongue had aroused the voice of a sleeping conscience, and, led by the hand of a little child, she had at length been brought back to the feet of that faithful monitor of her youth, by the memory of whose warning counsels and by the aid of whose blessed gift she would henceforth pursue in patience the path which leadeth unto life; ambitious only to accomplish the work which was given her to do, and cheered by the hopes which are full of immortality.

In this hour of exaltation, this season of the spirit's victory, the task did not seem hard. Already was the self-imposed duty lightened by that sweetener of life's heaviest toils which relieves the laborer of half his burthen; for, in the moment when, denying self, she assumed with holy fortitude the sacred guardianship of her brother, back to her heart, in a full, strong tide, came all the depth and tenderness of that sisterly love which had only been subdued and crushed by the force of a rival passion. Thus, not only would she devote herself to Harry's cause because duty pointed in that direction, but because, in view of every touching memory of their childhood, every sweet record of their maturer years, her heart forbade her to desert him.

As she now moved through the room preparing to put her purpose into execution, her countenance was marked by the serene composure of one animated by a high resolve and in-

spired by a holy mission. Her manner was no longer indicative of hesitation or uncertainty; and the hands which an hour ago had trembled with nervous indecision, performed what they had to do quickly and well.

She wrote a hasty note to Louise, explaining her change of plan, but giving no other reason for abandoning the journey than the simple truth — that, at the last moment, she had become convinced that her presence was needed at home. She begged her sister to write to her frequently, sent her love to the boys, hoped Cecilia would faithfully supply Lydia's place, and that Louise would in the enjoyment of other society have little occasion to regret her absence; which latter hope, we will remark in passing, she might reasonably indulge, since Mrs. Leroy was, when in general society, extremely indifferent to family ties.

It was nearly midnight when Cecilia returned from the hotel, weary, and with her own preparations for the journey still incomplete. She was amazed at the sight of Mabel's trunk, which was still empty, while every article of her scattered wardrobe was restored to its customary place.

"I am not going, Cecilia," said Mabel calmly, in answer to her look of astonishment. "Take this note to my sister in the morning, when you meet her at the boat. Robert will see to your baggage; remember, and take good care of the boys." And she dismissed her with a parting charge to retire as soon as possible, as she would be obliged to rise early.

Not until she had thus confirmed by act the heroic resolution of her mind, did she realize the exhaustion consequent upon agitation and excitement; but now, with a welcome sense of relief from tormenting doubts, and a humble reliance upon the power to which she had looked for strength, she gladly sought the rest which tired nature craves, and fell into a sweet and dreamless sleep, such as for many a week had deserted her pillow.

CHAPTER XXII.

In her deep, melancholy eye,
Life's brilliant hues no longer lie,
And love itself, its sweetest light,
Has left behind a starless night.
A night? Ah, no! 'T is early dawn —
The long, dark, hopeless hours are gone;
And Faith, the day-spring from on high,
Is beaming through her heavenward eye.

MRS. S. C. E. MAYO.

IF the exaltation of soul under which a high resolve is usually formed could be maintained during the period required for its fulfilment, the battle would be fought and the victory achieved almost without an effort. But who has not experienced the reaction, weakness, and self-distrust which are the natural consequence of an unwonted strain upon the physical and mental powers. Then, indeed, do we learn how little we can depend upon our own feeble efforts, unless sustained and strengthened by help and guidance from on high.

So it was with Mabel, when she awoke the morning after her supposed self-conquest, oppressed with a painful sense of lassitude and despondency, which made it an effort to rise and dress, and a still greater effort to look back upon the past with composure, and forward into the future with cheerfulness. She fully realized the unexpected truth, that not by one spasmodic effort can the soul achieve the sublime heights of self-denying virtue, but only by continual and persevering struggles, and a patient resting upon Him whose promise is steadfast,— "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Fortunately, her little Bible was close at hand, with its blessed words of encouragement and peace; and after resorting to its pages for counsel, and commending herself to Heaven in

prayer, she felt in some degree prepared to meet the events of the day. In the hall leading to the dining-room she met Robert, who reported the departure of the pleasure-party, all, according to his account, in high spirits except Alick and Murray, both of whom were crying with disappointment at her absence.

Mabel felt a rising in the throat, and a painful sinking of the spirits, as she thought of the dear children's grief and the still greater void which would be felt in the company by one who would join them at noon, would look for her amid the party, and, astonished at her absence, perhaps misconstruing its cause, would vainly seek from Louise a satisfactory solution of the mystery. Her drooping courage revived, however, at the unmistakable satisfaction which succeeded her father's first glance of surprise, as she entered the dining-room and approached the table where he was seated at breakfast. He had seen Robert return with the carriage, and supposed her already on her way to Albany; but listened with evident pleasure to her assurance that she had concluded, since she parted from him the previous day, to abandon the scheme altogether.

Attributing this change in her plans to some trifling disagreement with Louise, or dissatisfaction with the proposed arrangements, he forbore questioning her as to the cause of her apparently fickle conduct, but quite contented with the result, expressed himself with more than his ordinary decision in the words, "I am glad of it, my dear, — very glad. I have not approved, from the first, of your travelling with so large a party. Now, I trust, there is nothing to interfere with your visit to your aunt Margaret." So much was he gratified, indeed, that as he rose to leave the room, having finished his early breakfast, he laid his hand upon her head in an affectionate and paternal manner, which, considering his usual undemonstrative and reserved character, might almost be termed a caress, and at least signified a marked degree of approval.

Light as was the touch, it drew tears from Mabel's eyes, and left its impress on her heart for many a long day afterward. It seemed to reward her sacrifice with a father's blessing.

Harry's views and feelings, as he entered a moment after, were not so easy to determine.

"You see I have not gone," said Mabel, with an attempt at playfulness, as he made his appearance in the door-way and stopped short at sight of her.

"So I perceive," said he, advancing into the room and seating himself at the table with a languid air.

"We women have such a blessed privilege of changing our minds, you know," added she in the same tone.

"Yes, I should think so; you seem to have veered about with as much ease as a weather-cock. It is not many hours ago that I saw you plumed and winged for flight."

"My plumes drooped and my wings refused to soar, when it came to the trial!"

"Aren't you well?" asked he quickly, at the same time looking her anxiously and inquiringly in the face.

"Oh, yes, quite well, but I concluded to stay at home and make tea and coffee for father and you; taste and see if that is sweet enough," continued she, as she handed him a cup of steaming Mocha which she had been preparing.

He received the cup with an unsteady hand, rattled the spoon nervously, added several lumps of sugar in an absent way, then ladled them out carefully into his saucer, helped himself to a piece of steak, ate voraciously for a minute or two, and, finally, laying down his knife and fork, pushed back his chair and seized the newspaper, which had fallen on the floor beside him.

Mabel could not be sure whether he were suspicious or not that her journey had been abandoned on his account; but she was pained at the evident annoyance which her presence and attentions occasioned him. So manifest was his desire to escape her observations, that she strayed to the window, busied herself in feeding a canary, whose cage was suspended there, and when Harry suddenly and impatiently started up and left the room, forbore to question or follow him. She knew very well that the recovery of her influence over her brother must be

the work of time and patience, and that he would not endure to be either watched or catechised.

So this day proved no exception to the ordinary rule, and, as usual, he strolled from home soon after breakfast, without giving her any hint of his destination, or the probable time of his return.

It was hard to see him walk away so indifferent to her newly roused affection, her anxiety, her prayers in his behalf, and to be left alone to reflect on the seeming uselessness of the sacrifice she had made. Had this sacrifice involved some active labor, some constant employment for head and hands, it would have been comparatively easy to one of Mabel's energetic temperament. But passive endurance, patient waiting, hoping against hope, heroic virtues as they are, offer little stimulus to resolution, and require the severest exercise of self-denying fortitude.

Thus it was not strange that her spirits flagged, as she wandered listlessly from room to room; that her thoughts strayed to the pleasure-bound company of whom she had hoped to make one; and that as the remembrance of a still dearer hope agitated her heart, she could not resist the obtruding regret or check the rising tear.

But Mabel by nature was neither weak nor desponding; uncertainty and doubt had, it is true, to some degree paralyzed her powers, and while halting between two opinions her irresolute conduct had betrayed the indecision of her mind.

The path of right made plain, however, and conscientiously adopted, there was a firmness, stability, and self-respect in her character which, with the aid of Christian principle, gave promise that, cost her what it might, she would pursue it faithfully to the end. "I have made my choice," thought she, as, starting up from an indolent and meditative posture, she seemed at the same time to shake off the morbid and discouraging fancies which were gradually settling down upon her mind. "If Dudley loves me truly, he can trust me; if not, — but I will not suppose that possible, — he knows how much I depended on the journey, he will believe that no slight cause has detained

me here, — he will return and assure himself of the truth. In the mean time I will not waste my energies in useless repining."

So, resorting to the well-remembered remedy always recommended by Mrs. Herbert in cases of home-sickness and other mental maladies, she at once sought employment, and commenced, reluctantly, the task of answering numerous letters from her school-mates. She made every effort to write in a cheerful strain, and her young friends saw nothing in her communications to indicate the circumstances under which they were written; but as Mrs. Herbert, who was permitted to peruse them, observed that her once glowing descriptions of city life were wholly superseded by tender and touching reminiscences of her school days, she inwardly suspected that the former had already palled upon her taste, and that she yearned once more for the simple joys of her childhod and her country home.

Mabel made more than one attempt to thank this long-tried friend for her recently discovered and precious gift, to express some sense of the earnest gratitude she felt for all her love and counsel, and rejoice her heart with the assurance that the lessons so faithfully imparted to her in youth were destined to be the guide of her womanhood; but each time she shrunk from the difficulties involved in such an attempt, and at length laid down her pen in despair of succeeding to her own satisfaction. She dared not boast of resolutions not yet confirmed by practice; she feared to betray the secret of her disquiet and unhappiness, nor could she compromise Harry by replying truthfully to the many inquiries concerning him, which Mrs. Herbert's affectionate interest in his welfare had suggested. So the difficult duty was for the present abandoned altogether.

At two o'clock Mr. Vaughan came home to an early dinner, as had been his custom since the weather became warm. Harry did not make his appearance, however, and Mabel, as she sat opposite her father at table, was struck with his extremely anxious and haggard countenance. He was more than usually taciturn, only rousing himself from his abstraction once during

the meal, and then to remark, rather abruptly, "You are all alone, my dear, — it is very dull for you, — I hope we shall break up here before many days."

Mabel declared herself ready to go or remain, as he thought best, and no more was said on the subject; but after a hurried repast, he rose to repair to his office.

The weather was tempting, there was no prospect of Harry's return for some hours, and Mabel proposed to accompany her father a part of the way.

He assented to the proposition in an absent manner, and paced the hall impatiently until she appeared ready for the walk. So silent and self-engrossed was he, that Mabel walked beside him for the distance of several squares, without his addressing a syllable to her, nor could she fail to observe with pain an increased stoop in his figure, and tremulousness in his gait. She left him at the corner of the street leading to the widow Hope's dwelling; and as she proceeded thither to inquire after Rose, her sadness at these symptoms of old age and debility in her recently strong and vigorous parent, was mingled with a fresh glow of self-gratulation that she had not suffered herself to act in direct opposition to his wishes.

Rosy was overjoyed at seeing her, and Lydia, who stood behind the counter waiting upon a customer, was so excited with pleasure that she could scarcely command sufficient arithmetic to make the simple calculations which her office involved. None of the family had seen her since Rosy's never-to-be-forgotten drive; and of all the kindnesses she had rendered them, none had ever called forth so warm an expression of gratitude.

"She 's been brighter and better ever since," exclaimed the mother, with tears in her eyes, "and so happy!"

"Miss Mabel," cried the excited Lydia, "it was splendid; how came you to think of it? it has half cured her! and those dear boys, — they were as pleased as if they 'd never had a ride before, and all on Rosy's account, too, — look at her, Miss Mabel, see how she has brightened up."

She did, indeed, seem changed; there was an expression on the little face such as Mabel had never seen there before; it

seemed to tell of some inward rapture, some foretaste of coming glory.

"Miss Mabel," said Rose, in her little quiet voice, when her mother had walked away, and Lydia had returned to the counter, "it is n't that I am any better, but it has given me such beautiful thoughts all day, and such beautiful dreams all night. I know I shan't be here long, but I am not afraid to go. Oh, Miss Mabel, if God's earth is so glorious, what must his Heaven be!"

"Earth is but a sad place, after all, Rosy," said Mabel, with a sigh.

The child's ear, tuned to that plaintive minor chord which reveals the suffering of the heart, recognized as by intuition the mood of Mabel's mind, and turning upon her a face full of tender anxiety, she said, "Do you call it sad? are you a weary pilgrim, too? and is your path ever dark? I thought it was always as bright as sunshine."

"Oh, Rosy," said Mabel, glancing up at the engraving from which, as usual, Rose's figure was drawn, "I cannot see my way at all, there is such a thick cloud over head."

She had not calculated upon the effect of this acknowledgment, which she would have shrunk from making to one less simple-hearted and innocent than Rose. It seemed to establish at once the only bond of sympathy ever wanting between herself and the suffering child, who seized her hand, pressed it to her thin lips, and exclaimed, fervently, "God will show the way, Miss Mabel; he will lighten your path as he has lightened mine."

The child's solemn and prophetic assurance of heavenly guidance, both awed and touched the soul that yearned for encouragement and strength. Mabel could not answer, except by the tears which started to her eyes. Rose went on.

"There used to be long days and nights, Miss Mabel, when I lay on my little bed in great pain, worrying to think how much trouble I gave, how poor we were, and, more than all, about Jack, and what would become of him. I could not see God always then. I could not understand how so many sor-

rows could be sent in love. I tried to be patient. I tried to be hopeful and believing; but I could not understand. I see it all now, though," she added, a glow overspreading and irradiating her pale face, while the eyes that had lost their strained appearance seemed calmly to contemplate a near and visible joy. "The pain is all gone. I am not anxious now, not even about Jack; the picture promised truly, — the end has almost come, and the light I see is that which streams from the Paradise of God."

She looked, indeed, like one already half translated, as, borne on the wings of faith, she saw all her past sufferings merged in the fulness of joy.

Such a clear discerning of God's providence in one who had groped her way through a sea of suffering, was like a light shining in a dark place. The cloud seemed lifted from Mabel's future, as she listened to the child's grateful tribute to the love which had crowned her days.

"Dear Rose, dear child," said she, "it does me good to see you so happy. You certainly have a heaven in your heart, — I must try and learn some of your secrets."

The child smiled at the last word, then with mingled sweetness and gravity, whispered, drawing Mabel down so that her mouth came close to her ear, "God will send his blessed angels to teach you all my secrets, and I will pray to Him every night to take away your cloud."

From this time, the relations hitherto subsisting between Mabel and Rose seemed totally reversed. Until now, the former had acted the part of the elder, stronger, wiser friend, but in this, and in all their future interviews, the strength, the wisdom, and the riper years, which had constituted her superiority, instinctively gave place to that experience in Heavenly truth, that knowledge of things divine, in which Rose was the thoroughly-gifted teacher, and she but the humble disciple. It is true there was no outward and visible token of their altered position. Beauty, wealth, and a high place in the social scale, all combined to render Mabel, as she had ever been, the object of the sick girl's respectful admiration; and the infirmities of

Rose, more than ever, claimed the tenderest compassion in return; but a shadow had fallen on the path of the one, while the other had reached the point where all shadows flee away; and the maiden who had but just begun to meet the battle of life, gladly caught up the sacred weapons with which the child had achieved her victory.

Thus, almost daily, she found herself drawn to that little sanctuary of holy hopes, devout meditations, and serene joy, where not she alone, but many a troubled heart besides, learned a true and lasting lesson from the unconscious glow of piety which illumined the face of the wasted and now dying girl.

Almost to the last, she occupied her little flag-bottomed arm-chair, in the window of her mother's shop, reluctant to give up her daily and loving intercourse with the numerous friends who looked to see her there, and so much was Mabel with her during the last fortnight of her life, that her face, too, became familiar to the neighborhood, which seemed animated by a grateful affection for Rosy's beautiful friend.

They knew how unsparing she had been in attentions and gifts to the little invalid; they had measured with their eyes many a parcel of books, fruit, and wholesome food, which they had seen carried into the widow's dwelling, and they had rejoiced in Rosy's joy on the eventful day of the drive.

But they did not know the precious blessings she had carried away, they could not measure the refreshing nourishment her soul had imbibed from this fountain of childish wisdom, they could not rejoice in the holy and penitent emotions there awakened — emotions such as make joy in Heaven.

Only in after years did Mabel herself fully realize the source whence most of her holy aspirations were drawn; only when she had proved the fallacy of more presumptuous teachers, and learned that the sublimest truths are often those which God has hid from the wise and prudent, and has revealed unto babes!

On the day of the conversation with Rose, some portion of which has been related in detail, she left the widow Hope's shop to return home, with a heart wonderfully cheered and lightened of its burthen. It was nearly dark, when, as she

crossed the little park in the direction leading to her father's house, she overtook Harry. He had entered the square from a different street, and seeing her hastening towards him, stopped and waited for her.

"You have been walking fast," said he, as she came up.

"Yes," she answered, a little out of breath, "I saw it was getting dark."

He did not ask where she had been, but walked beside her in silence, and when they reached the house, accompanied her up the steps and rang the bell.

As Robert appeared, however, and opened the door, he turned to walk away.

"Oh, don't go, Harry!" exclaimed she, adding with womanly tact, "I shall be all alone." She knew how much more readily in his present mood he would confer than receive a favor. "Father has not come in, has he?" asked she, turning quickly to Robert.

"No, Miss."

"Oh, do stay then, Harry, and take tea with me."

"Tea," muttered he, as he reluctantly followed her into the hall, "who wants tea such a warm evening?"

"Aunt Sabiah says one is always cooler after tea in summer," replied she playfully, leading the way as she spoke to her little treasure apartment.

"Because the sun has gone down," replied he, with a smile, almost with a laugh.

Far as it was from being a genuine, hearty laugh, Mabel hailed it as of good omen, and flinging her bonnet upon the table, and throwing open the blinds of a wide window extending to the floor, she at once gave admittance to the breeze, and imparted an attractive air to the little apartment. Harry drew an arm chair to the window, threw himself into it, and looked out. Mabel sat down on the window-sill resting her feet on a little balcony outside. The moon presently began to shine on the little park, and the trees to cast long shadows. It was a pleasant scene, presented by this June evening, even in the city. It reminded Mabel of similar evenings at her grand-

mother's, or Mrs. Herbert's, when she and Harry had sat together for hours on the door-step in the moon-light. She ventured some reference to those bygone days, and Harry, falling in with her train of thought, listened without impatience to her reminiscences, and even called up incidents in their childhood which had quite escaped her recollection.

Tremblingly rejoicing in the success which was attending her efforts, Mabel spared no pains to render the occasion agreeable. She ordered tea to be brought to them instead of descending to the dining-room, and bade Robert light the alabaster lamp, which threw a scarcely less soft and pleasant glow of light through the room than that which prevailed outside.

Now and then Harry rose and paced the room nervously, as if on the point of leaving her; then, seeming to think she would be lonely, — possibly timid, — for there was an unusual noise of voices in the street below, he sat down again, and so the evening passed away. Mabel could not but suspect that he had staid with her reluctantly, but it was no slight triumph that he had remained on any terms, and it was an inexpressible satisfaction to bid him good-night, and see him ascend to his own room, like the Harry of former times.

Taught by this instance of success, she afterwards made frequent appeals to his kind and brotherly feeling, and occasionally with a similar result. She needed exercise, — would he take a walk with her? she longed for the country air, — would he not drive her out? selfish pleas, which she might reasonably urge, for her life was one of unusual restraint and monotony. She chose for her constant occupancy a seat in her little room, where Harry was almost sure to find her whenever he felt the disposition, and it soon became evident that his desire to avoid her society was somewhat abated, as he often lounged in for a few moments at a time, either after breakfast, or when he chanced to return home to dinner. But though he no longer seemed to look upon her as one seeking occasion to watch and censure him, and though now and then she succeeded in engrossing a short interval of his time, these grounds of hope were slight

and infrequent, while her discouragements were continual and pressing. Day by day his countenance grew more unnatural, his step more unsteady, while his expression of nervous distress and uneasiness had become fixed and habitual. Midnight and the early morning hours often found Mabel at her solitary window, awaiting his return; and the disappointment of his failing to come at all was less bitter than the coarse jokes, angry oaths, or wild, wandering glances, which at times betrayed his sad condition.

Her father, too, was evidently the subject of more than one harassing anxiety. Those fatal charts over which he had pored all winter, engrossed his time whenever he chanced to be at home, and, frequently, when he left the house, he rolled them up and took them under his arm, while Mabel watched him as he came and went every time with a deeper shadow on his brow.

And there was still another for whom she watched and waited, who came not at all; another footstep whose fancied echo now and then caused her a sudden start; another form which haunted her by day and stole into her dreams at night; but step and form were alike imaginary. Had there been a letter, or a message simply, it might have afforded some solace to her aching heart—had Louise even written, and incidentally alluded to the companions of her journey; but no, all was blank silence, and Mabel was forced to the conclusion — he does not trust, perhaps he never loved.

All her faith, indeed, was needed to sustain her drooping spirits in the many lonely hours to which she was condemned. As she wandered through the solitary rooms of her father's spacious house, she sometimes longed for the idle rattle of Louise, the merry voices of the boys, or even the light foot and busy tongue of Cecilia, to break the dreary silence and monotony.

But in these seasons of sad and solitary reflection, deprived of all human sympathy, Mabel began to experience how sweet it is to draw near to the ever-present friend, who has bid His children cast all their cares upon Him, for He careth for them;

she learned to realize in these bitter hours of life, that there is one eye that never sleepeth, one ear that is ever open to the suppliant's cry; and often, rising above her sorrows and forgetting her solitude, she was ready to exclaim, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

CHAPTER XXIII.

No studied words of sympathy
  Were coldly whispered round;
The silence of the humble throng
  Told more than measured sound.
And children touched the cold, white brow,
  And then in awe stood by,
Their new-learnt lesson thinking o'er,
  Of angels in the sky. A. M. F. Annan.

The month of June had nearly half expired. Mr. Vaughan still delayed his journey to the West, and gave Mabel no new intimation of his wish that she should start for L. Perhaps he still hoped that Harry, who had listened in moody silence to the declaration of his wishes in respect to his profession, and had thus far shown no disposition to carry them into effect, would at length manifest some symptoms of compliance and accompany her. He forbore to urge the point, however, and in spite of the increasing heat, no departure from the city was alluded to, until one evening, when all three having been present at dinner, Mr. Vaughan rose at its conclusion and gravely announced to Harry his wish to speak with him in the library, to which room he himself immediately repaired. Harry lingered a few moments at the table, then rising with the air of a detected culprit, followed his father, closed the door behind him, and the two were closeted together for nearly an hour.

This period was one to Mabel of painful suspense; the formality of the interview left her little doubt of its importance, and she could easily conjecture the nature of the subjects likely to be brought up. Deeply agitated, trembling so that she could scarcely stand, and straining her ears to catch the slightest sound, she remained in the spot where they had left her, until she heard the library door open and saw Harry leave the house,

followed soon after by Mr. Vaughan, who, walking slowly, with his hands behind him, looked like one upon whom trouble has fallen with a sudden weight, which he is calculating the chances and possibilities of relieving.

She learned, afterwards, that her father and brother had been engaged in settling the preliminaries of the latter's leaving New York for L.; and that these preliminaries consisted of a confession on Harry's part of a heavy debt (a debt of honor, so called, contracted at the gaming table), which effectually prevented his leaving the city, and of an agreement, with difficulty entered into by his already embarrassed parent, to meet the demand and free him from the mortifying shackles, upon condition of his conforming strictly to his views, and at once commencing the study of law with Judge Paradox. She learned, too, to her surprise, that this was the first interview Mr. Vaughan had ever had with Harry on the subject of his misconduct, and that even now, he received his confession and dismissed him without any other reprimand than that which the dullest eye might detect in his countenance; this course being simply characteristic of his extreme reserve, even with his family, and want of force in regulating the conduct of his household. It was only after a considerable lapse of time, however, that Mabel became aware of these facts, and at present she was left to all the pain of uncertainty and apprehension.

This was somewhat allayed by the circumstance that her father and Harry both returned home at an earlier hour than usual, and by her observing that, though excessively constrained in each other's society, they seemed individually to be relieved, and in a slight degree cheered; the one that he had made a confession which it was no longer possible to escape, and the other from a conviction that, bad as the case was, he now knew the worst.

Mr. Vaughan took an early opportunity of informing his daughter that it was his desire that she should leave for L., the following week, with Harry, and the latter indirectly confirmed the tidings of his intended departure, by some accidental reference to the journey. Mabel also learned that her father's long

postponed trip to the West would take place immediately upon his having dismissed the servants, and closed the house, measures which he had resolved to adopt, as he should be absent for an indefinite period.

She had now plenty of employment. For the first time she realized the necessity of looking over her father's wardrobe, and providing for his comfort, during the many weeks of his absence; and this, with similar cares for herself and Harry, promised ample occupation, and caused her to rejoice in that womanly skill and capability which made her independent of Cecilia, who had usually officiated with her needle in this department.

She was busily engaged the next morning, going from room to room, collecting various articles which were in need of some slight repair, when she received a summons to the hall door, where a little girl stood waiting to deliver a message from Mrs. Hope. Rose was very low, had been anxious to see her, — would she try and come at once?

Had Mabel had more experience in cases of slow decline she would not have been astonished at this summons, for, to those who understood Rose's symptoms, it was only a matter of surprise that she had lingered so long; but Mabel had not realized, until now, how surely and speedily death must follow the decay, whose progress she had marked step by step, and a chill and shudder crept over her frame as she hastily prepared to follow the little messenger, who had run back as swiftly as she came. Although the day was oppressively hot, she would not wait for the carriage, but walking a short distance, and then availing herself of a Broadway omnibus, she soon reached her destination.

An air of unusual quiet and sadness seemed to pervade the little street; the neighbors looked after Mabel as she passed, wondering whether she, like them, knew of the fearful change which a few hours had made; the children had ceased their play, and two of the elder ones sat weeping on the door-step of the closed shop. Mabel approached the little alley which communicated with the rear of the building, and at its entrance en-

countered Rosy's sturdy friend, the youthful teamster, who was brushing his rough sleeve across his eyes, and did not see her until she paused to let him pass. As he looked up, recognized her, and read an anxious inquiry in her face, he said in a low, tremulous voice, "She 's going, — they tell me she can't last the day out." Then pressing his lips firmly together, as strong men do when their feelings threaten to get the mastery of them, he rushed by her, crossed the street, and darted down the archway.

In the humble courtyard, women were engaged at their washtubs, or in hanging out clothes, and as she stooped in passing beneath the wet linen more than one eye followed her with mournful interest, while now and then a childish face glanced up with a pitiful, imploring look, as if hoping she had come indued with some magic power to make Rosy well again. Just as she reached the widow's door, she stopped short, believing that the angel of death had preceded her, for outside the shed, stretched across a little wood-pile, lay a forlorn figure, convulsed with sobs, which she at once recognized as that of Jack. The poor boy had evidently thrown himself there in an agony of grief, and in the self-abandonment of a first heart-breaking sorrow was utterly unconscious of everything around. His head rested on his arms, and his hands clutched at the wood, as if he were wrestling with outward obstacles to ease his inward woe, the depth of which might in some degree be measured by the spasmodic heaving of his chest, and an hysterical choking in his throat.

Overwhelmed with pity for the boy, to whom she could not venture to speak, and suspecting that a similar scene prevailed in doors, Mabel was hesitating whether she should not depart without intruding into the house of mourning, when the widow, who had caught sight of her figure through the window, came out to meet her. Mabel took her hand and glanced from her face, which was perfectly calm, to that of the agitated Jack.

"Poor fellow!" said Mrs. Hope, compassionately, "he takes it hard, and no wonder. She 's been talking to him," added she in a whisper, "and so beautifully, — he won't forget it to

his dying day. She 's asleep now, as quiet as a lamb; it 's a chance whether she ever wakes, but if she should, Miss Mabel, I thought she 'd like to rest her eyes on your face again; she asked for you once or twice in the night, — so if you 'll come in " —

Mabel followed without speaking, — for she could not speak, — into the little room. She was indeed sleeping sweetly, her little hands clasped on her breast, her golden hair thrown back upon the pillow, and a smile upon her face, which seemed to tell of heavenly dreams. An hour passed on and still she slept; the room was so quiet, that each breath of the little sleeper might be counted; there was no noise outside, for love had set its faithful guard around the house, and every footfall in the neighborhood was softened, every loud voice hushed. By-and-by a flushed, swollen, and tear-stained face appeared in the doorway, and Jack, in his stocking-feet, came slowly, cautiously in, and sat down among the watchers. There was another pause, and at length softly, and without warning, the blue eyes once more unclosed, with one more fond, loving glance, they rested in turn on each of the assembled group, — not eye to eye, but soul to soul, they seemed to stand, taking their last farewell of her who, in a moment more, would be a disembodied spirit. The breath grew shorter, the blue orbs closed, — they listened, — there was no breath at all, and then the glory came and settled on the little face.

As if the parting spirit, which had left its radiance on the mortal clay, still hovered above their heads, they all for a while stood motionless and awed; then, as a consciousness of the dread reality rushed upon them, Jack darted from the room with a loud cry of anguish, Lydia buried her head in her mother's lap, and Mabel, drawing her veil over her face, glided noiselessly away.

The little form which had taken birth within the close atmosphere of the city, and pined and perished in the narrow limits of a dark and gloomy street, was not destined to sleep its last sleep within those crowded and imprisoning walls. They buried her on a quiet hill-side, where the grass

and wild flowers might grow on the little grave, where summer insects and soaring birds might chirp and sing above it, and where the murmur of running water fell upon the ear.

"Will they give her a place among the city poor," asked the milk-boy of the ruddy teamster, nodding his head significantly in the direction of the vacant window.

Owen Dowst, — for that was the teamster's name, — feared so, but it seemed to him a pity.

He but echoed the thought of the boisterous milk-boy, who had a heart as big and tender as his voice was deep and sonorous. "There's a little Dutch burying-ground in the corner of my father's milk-farm," said the boy; "it slopes down to the East River, and is out o' use now. There's no crowding there, — room enough, and a plenty for many a child like that; tell 'em so; and look here, Owen, if the idea suits the widder, drive out with your team to-night, and I'll be there myself with a spade."

And so it was that no hired hands dug the little grave.

"The blessed Lord spared our Jemmy to us, it's now six months ago, wife," said a pale-faced undertaker, whose workshop was not far off, "and there's the box I worked away at, that long week, while you watched to see him die. I could n't ever sell it, no how. I've cried over it many a time, and often thought, when I've laid eyes on't since, that it seemed like a keepsake, to remind me o' the mercy o' the Lord. But I've been a thinkin' to part with it. If 't would n't be no offence to anybody, I'd like to see the little golden-haired gal, that had such a pretty smile for everybody, laid in the cradle I made for my boy. It's the best o' stuff, and I driv every nail myself. S'posen you go round to-night and speak on't to the poor woman. Speak kind o' gentle, wife; poor soul, her child is gone."

A messenger was dispatched in due season by Mabel, to make every possible offer of assistance, but all that love could dictate had been done already; the humble neighbors had vied with each other in their efforts to comfort the family and honor the memory of the angel child.

The funeral was appointed for the day preceding that on which Mabel was to leave New York, and she was in attendance at an early hour. The house was quiet and in perfect order; she entered at the shop door, but the bell was muffled and gave forth no sound. The kitchen into which she passed was vacant, save that the child, clad in her snow white robes, seemingly lay sleeping there. The little hands were peacefully folded on the breast, the serene smile still rested on the face, and beauty was stamped upon the features from which pain had forever fled. Death had not only glorified the soul, but had transfigured the mortal part.

"She is not here, — she is risen," said a low, solemn voice, close at Mabel's side.

She looked up, unconscious that any one had entered the room, where she stood absorbed in contemplation. It was the tall and venerable man, known to us as Father Noah. Mabel recognized him at once, though she could not recall his name. He seemed regardless, however, of ceremony, in resuming his acquaintance with her, and continued —

"You have known this child, — for she was a child in years," he added, as if feeling that in some sense the term was misapplied.

Mabel bowed in assent, her tearful face speaking plainly of the affection she had felt for her.

"She was a wonderful child," he exclaimed, meditatively, — "wonderful! She has accomplished a beautiful work in this neighborhood, — it puts to shame many of my profession. Death has no power over such as she, except to release them from pain. I am glad you knew her," he said, after a pause.

Perhaps Mabel's expression as he spoke, revealed some surprise at the personal interest implied in his remark, for he said again, — "Yes, I am very glad you knew her. I have no doubt it has been a benefit to her, — I am sure it has been to you."

"She, — she has been my better angel!" exclaimed Mabel fervently, — "she is still."

"Her life has been a lesson to us all," said the good clergy-

man. "I pray God," he continued, laying his hand solemnly on Mabel's head, "that He will perfect and finish the good work which, through one of his humblest servants, He has begun in you." So saying, he went to meet Mrs. Hope in the little inner room, and Mabel turned away to recover her self-command.

As she stood resting her hand on the mantel-piece above the kitchen stove, she caught sight of an open daguerreotype case, which, on a nearer inspection, she discovered to contain a likeness of Rosy. It had been taken at some happy moment when the gentle smile was on her face, and the little arm-chair, her simple dress, and all the features of her ordinary life, were faithfully impressed by the magic instrument. Mabel was wondering that she had never seen it before, and was blessing God in her heart for that beneficent invention in which rich and poor may almost be said to share alike, when Jack appeared at her side and attempted to speak. Except at Rosy's death-bed, Mabel had never seen him since the day they met in the grocer's shop, and the latter scene rose full before her as she turned and met his eager face. Impressed by her glance, and half choked with his own grief, the boy made one or two vain attempts to articulate. Then, pointing at the likeness of his sister, he gasped out, in broken phrase, the words, "I — I — paid for it — with — that dollar," and overcome by his emotion, he clapped his rough hands to his face and disappeared through the doorway.

The little neighborhood now began to assemble, and Mabel, retreating to a corner, was touched to see them enter. There was no formality, no ceremony, in receiving them or awarding them their place; they came in crowds, but there was no confusion; the little house could not contain half of them, and they entered in turn to gaze once more at the features of the neighborhood's child, and those for whom there was no room patiently waited without. All ages were represented. Old women were there, leaning on their staffs, and children were borne in their father's arms to take one more look at Rosy. The girls of her little class were there, wearing no badge of

mourning, but each, with instinctive and grateful prompting, bearing under her arm the little testament, — pledge of Rose's love.

The service at length commenced. It was performed by the clergyman already alluded to, and was simple, solemn, beautiful, interrupted only by the sobs which rung through the house. It concluded with a hymn — a voluntary and touching tribute, the sweet lifting up of childish voices, the simple offering of loving hearts. There was a pause, and then the crowd began to file away, lingering without the door until the little form should be borne through their midst. There had been no concerted arrangements with regard to bearers, and a slight hesitation ensued in consequence, when a tall youth stepped forward, closed the casket, lifted it gently in his strong arms, and bore it slowly and tenderly through the parting crowd. The widow and her children followed Owen Dowst as he thus cleared for them a passage through the friendly throng, took their place in the humble vehicle which awaited them, and in a moment more moved on. With one consent the assembled neighborhood formed in long and regular procession, and treading the sidewalk with slow and solemn pace, kept the carriage in sight for the distance of a mile or two and then reluctantly and sadly dispersed.

Mabel found herself alone in the deserted house. She had left her carriage at some little distance, feeling that its rich trappings would be a mockery in this place of humble, sacred sorrow. She looked round the little shop as if bidding it a long farewell, then stepped upon the sidewalk. An old woman stood there leaning upon her staff — a very old woman, too infirm to follow the mourning procession — the same old woman who lived in the opposite house and had been accustomed to watch Rosy from the window.

"We sha n't ever see her there no more," said she to Mabel, pointing with her crutch to the little empty arm-chair, "but," and she looked up to the sky above, "Heaven do n't seem so far off to an old body like me, now that I know she 's sittin' at some bright winder up there, watchin' to see me comin' in."

"Drive out on the Bloomingdale road, Donald," said Mabel, when she reached the carriage. "You will overtake the child's funeral; follow, but keep at a distance."

They did so; and as the little train moved into the unpretending cemetery, Mabel alighted and joined the mourners, who were grouped around the grave. They saw the child laid in her quiet resting-place,— they waited and listened with sad hearts, while Owen and the milk-boy, who had reached the spot before them, gently heaped the earth upon her grave, and then they went away. Mabel lingered a little behind the rest, feeling, as the earth closed over the remains of her little friend, scarcely less bereaved than the broken-hearted group who had looked their last upon the darling of their hearts. "Dear Rosy," thought she, as seating herself on the grass of the sloping hill-side, she strewed the mound with the flowers which she had brought for the purpose, "'He maketh thee to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth thee beside the still waters;' thine earthly pilgrimage was hard, but its end is peace, joy, and everlasting life."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Her love is firme, her care continuall,
So oft as he, through his own foolish pride
Or weaknes, is to sinful bands made thrall.

SPENSER.

"MY daughter Margaret takes after me," was a favorite exclamation of the old lady Vaughan. "She has more shrewdness in her little finger than Sabiah has in her whole body."

This was very true; for Mrs., now the widow, Ridgway, was preëminent for nearly all the qualities which were conspicuous in her mother, and in which Sabiah was totally deficient. Thus she was proud, ambitious, calculating, and selfish. Money was in her eyes the chief good; and the social standing and distinction which it helped to purchase were among the most precious consequences of its possession. Keen and far-seeing in her observation of men and things, she rarely failed to gain her point, and no one was ever known to win the advantage of her in an argument or a bargain. She prided herself upon being a good manager and upon conducting her household on the most thorough, economical and saving principles. The neighborhood always gave her the credit, also, of managing her husband, a patient, plodding man, who set an exalted estimate upon her capacity, and practically acknowledged her as his better half.

Hospitality was a virtue to which she had no claim; for, unless prompted by some ulterior motive, she was seldom known to throw open her doors for the entertainment of guests. After the death of Mr. Ridgway, indeed, her utter solitude might seem sufficient to render her sister's society desirable; but this was by no means the prominent cause of her extending an invitation to Sabiah. In the first place, her brother John had set her the example, and she would not be outdone by him

in patronizing their destitute relative; and secondly, her sagacious mind saw various ways and means by which Sabiah might be made a useful auxiliary in her household. It was pride and policy, therefore, rather than natural affection, which induced her to offer her sister a home.

Nor was the apparent cordiality with which she begged a visit from her nephew and niece due to any more disinterested motives. Though Mrs. Ridgway would never have acknowledged the fact, she did not feel quite satisfied with her social position in L——; and as the town of L—— was to her the world, the attainment of this desirable position was her highest earthly ambition. It was true, her husband had long been the moneyed man of the place, and so had his father before him. There was scarcely a family of standing in the neighborhood which had not, in some remote generation, or in the person of some one of its members, been brought into close business relations, or even under personal obligations, to the elder or younger Ridgway; and the widow of the latter could boast an acquaintance with every onward and retrograde step of their affairs, every intermarriage they had made, every inch of their pedigree.

This intimate knowledge *of* the aristocracy of L——, however, had never ripened into that actual intimacy *with* them which Mrs. Margaret Ridgway coveted. The member of Congress for the district had been in the habit of talking freely with Mr. Ridgway on the church steps; the handsome daughters of Judge Paradox bowed politely to his widow, when they met her in the street or the shops; and all subscription papers and charity petitions were promptly handed to her door.

Still there was an easy, every-day intercourse prevailing in this choice circle, which existed quite independently of the loud-spoken, bustling, and not over-refined woman of wealth, who eagerly sought admittance within its pale; and it was with the view of breaking down this nicely-defined line of separation, that she now proposed to add to her own claims those of her nephew and niece.

Though her sphere of action and observation had been lim-

ited, Mrs. Ridgway understood the world and was not deceived in her calculations. Mr. John Vaughan was known by repute in this his native county. New York was not so far distant but that reports of his wealth, standing, and fashionable alliance had reached the ears of those who remembered him in his boyhood, and the busy tongue of Mrs. Ridgway was not needed to circulate the beauty of his daughter or the accomplishments of his foreign-bred son.

Thus, when the aunt, presuming upon the attractions of her expected visitors, ventured to stop the carriage of the member of Congress, converse somewhat more familiarly than usual with his wife, and close with "I expect my nephew and niece next week — your young people must call," a girlish face on the front seat looked very bright and animated, and the lady herself replied without hesitation, "They will do so, certainly; what day did you say you expected them?"

And when, too, she joined Mrs. Paradox, coming down the church aisle, and remarked somewhat abruptly, "So my nephew is to study law with your husband, I hear!" the stately Mrs. Paradox pressed Mrs. Ridgway's hand with rather more warmth than usual, saying, "Yes, a very agreeable addition to our circle," and thinking, "a capital chance for one of my handsome daughters."

Thus the arrival of the judge's student, and his sister, the New York belle, imparted no little excitement to the place. Mabel's first appearance with Mrs. Ridgway at church, was the realization of a long delayed hope, and it was with proportionate disappointment that many an eye looked in vain for her brother, who, in spite of his aunt's offended looks and protestations, lay stretched on a sofa at home. It was well, perhaps, that he staid away on this occasion, for the presence of Mabel alone proved sufficient to turn the heads of all the young girls in the congregation. Her height, her dress, her complexion, were duly studied, and more than one little piece of vanity spent the whole of the sermon time mentally endeavoring to cut the pattern of a graceful fall of lace, which gave Miss Vaughan's straw bonnet such a genteel air.

In the course of the week everybody called, and various festivities, purposely postponed until now, began to be talked of and prepared for. The young strangers, meanwhile, were the universal subjects of notice and conversation. Mabel's manners, beauty, and becoming attire, furnished no small source of novelty and interest, but the innovations and surprises which Harry introduced, were of a still more startling and original nature in the eyes of the quiet towns people. His English gig was of a style never before seen in L.; his long-tailed gray ponies were not to be surpassed in the country; but these wonders were eclipsed by the arrival of his famous trotting mare, Mad Sallie, which he had ordered to be sent after him, and which, with its fancy blanket and braided tail, was talked of and canvassed for ten miles round.

Thus the town of L., so far from proving a place of summer retirement and repose, had been suddenly thrown into a ferment, and Mabel and Harry found themselves in the very centre of a whirl and excitement of their own creating.

"Why need I go down, Aunt Sabiah?" Mabel would say, when morning visitors were announced. "They do not come to see me, and it is so pleasant to be quiet and at leisure in the country."

"Oh, don't call it country, dear," Sabiah would reply, in a deprecating voice; "she won't like it, — besides, you must go down. Why, they have called on purpose to see you, — she'll be dreadfully put out" — she, with Sabiah, always meaning her sister Margaret.

In a moment more the bustling, flurried, impatient Mrs. Ridgway would put her head inside the door, exclaiming, "Make haste, Mabel. O child, I wish you had on your lilac dress! It's the So and So's; do hurry down, they're such pleasant people, — been so attentive to me since Mr. Ridgway died," and Mabel, dressing her face in the smile which masked a heavy heart, would go down and do her best to give satisfaction.

As for Harry, he soon found his level in this new sphere. There is a freemasonry among fast young men, and, go where

they will, they speedily find their compeers, and are recognized in their turn. Change of scene, and relief from the embarrassments he had woven around himself in New York, for a time checked him in his self-indulgent course, and Mabel began to hope that her never-ceasing care and influence, the restraints of her aunt's house, and interest in the study of his profession, would prove efficient and salutary safeguards, and finally restore him to himself. It happened unfortunately, however, that a neighboring university had just released its students for a summer vacation, and among the idle young men thus thrown upon the community, Harry found more congenial minds than those which were embalmed on the walls of Judge Paradox's office. The dashing city blade, whose fast horses were the admiration of the neighborhood, and whose attractive manners and generous habits won him universal popularity, could not resist the temptation to forsake the musty study of the law, and engage in those excursions, drives, sporting and fishing parties, which would have been harmless, but for the loss of time they involved, and the imprudence, folly, and extravagance to which they eventually led.

Whatever good resolutions he might have formed, whatever efforts at self-control he might have made, it soon became evident that the former had become undermined by temptation, and the latter had proved insufficient to resist it. With aching heart, Mabel saw her short-lived hopes extinguished, and trembled more than ever for the consequences of her brother's reckless and wild career. She had but two rules for her own conduct regarding him, — there were but two agents which she employed for his salvation, and these were love and prayer. Not by word or look did she censure or blame him. She well knew that judgment belongeth unto God, and can only be rashly assumed by any,—least of all by a sister. But she understood in all its force the right which that sweet relationship implies, and, counselled by her tender affection alone, she patiently strove to be true to its faithful dictates.

Not less gentle, beneficent, and self-sacrificing, were these loving counsels, from the fact that they had their source in the

secret depths of a humble and contrite, as well as deceived, forsaken, and disappointed heart. Though forbearing to reproach her brother, bitterly did Mabel now reproach herself for the many wasted and misspent hours which had robbed her of his society and confidence, and given her in return only blighted hopes, wasted affections, and a grieved and wounded spirit. Shrink from it as she might, disown, as she long did, the cruel thought, the conviction gradually forced itself upon her, that her heart had been perseveringly sought to be lightly discarded, that it had garnered up its treasures in one who prized not the gift, and that the friendship which to her had seemed the crowning circumstance of life, had been to him but a winter's pastime.

Had this conjecture still admitted of a doubt, that doubt would have been effectually removed by a letter received from Mrs. Leroy about a fortnight after Mabel's arrival in L.

It was dated from Trenton, where the party, after spending four weeks in travelling, had agreed to pass a few days before finally separating. After giving a general account of the journey, Louise added, "It has not been so very pleasant after all, — there has been so much disagreement about our route, and as to who were entitled to the best rooms in the hotels. Fan Broadhead seemed to think the world was made for her. Mrs. Vannecker manœuvered, as she always does, to get the best of everything, and I stood up for my rights now and then, for I had no idea of being trampled on by anybody. Fan and the Colonel quarrel so, it's perfectly scandalous; and Mrs. Earle has given a great deal of trouble too; — she has been ill ever since we left Niagara; and my boys have plagued me to death, — Cecilia can't manage them at all. Nobody has seemed to enjoy it much but Mr. Dudley and a Mrs. Wolfe, the English widow who was at Fan's wedding, and joined her and the Colonel on the trip. She is young, and pretty, and sentimental, — talks poetry and so on, and Mr. Dudley is perfectly devoted to her. They take moonlight walks, and sit on the rocks and compose sonnets. It is a regular flirtation. Mr. Earle calls her Mr. Dudley's last. I can't see what he

finds to fancy in her; she makes herself very disagreeable to every body else. I shall go from here to Newport, and advise you to join me there; if you have been at Aunt Ridgway's a fortnight, you must need change of air and scene. I made her a visit once when I was a little girl, and I never shall forget it. I have n't heard from Mr. Leroy for a month. I suppose there are letters for me in New York. Tell Harry he had better come to Newport and bring his horses."

Mabel had read and re-read this letter some half dozen times; had thought and wept over its contents, and it still lay open on her lap, when her solitude was broken in upon by the entrance of her aunt Sabiah; it was one of her trials now, that she seldom had an hour which she could enjoy without interruption. Sabiah was rarely the intruder, however, it being usually the bustling Mrs. Ridgway, who robbed her of all peace and quiet. She tried to look a welcome, therefore, as her aunt came cautiously in, glanced around, and then carefully shut the door behind her.

"Seems to me I would go to the party to-night, Mabel," said she in a subdued voice, as if she believed some one were listening at the key-hole, "she 's got her heart so set on it."

"Oh, do n't ask me to do that, aunt," replied Mabel, a little impatiently, rising abruptly from her seat, and thrusting her letter into her pocket. "I can 't go, — I do not feel like it, — I 'm out of spirits. Every body is at times," added she, as Sabiah glanced from the letter to her face.

"Well, I dare say you 've got a letter from Louise; no wonder it has put you out of sorts — it would me. But, la! you 'd feel better to go to the party and see all the young people, and have a good time. *She* did n't like what you said yesterday about not going."

"It can 't make any difference to her," said Mabel. "She thinks I enjoy these things, but I do not in the least, Aunt. I can't bear to see so many people. She does not go to such places herself, and I had rather stay at home with her and you."

"Well, but you see, my dear, this is n't a common occasion.

Mrs. Bloodgood, who gives this party, is wife to the member of Congress from this district. They 're a very fine family — one of the oldest families anywhere round. I used to hear of them and of all their fine doings when I lived at home. *She* never knew them much before you came, and she counts on your going and making a fine show and all that. 'T would be a pity to put her out; you don't know how set she is about a thing, when she has made up her mind to it." Sabiah spoke rapidly, urging her sister's cause as if it had been her own, and betraying at the same time her dread of that displeasure of which she had early learned to stand in awe.

Under ordinary circumstances Mabel would have felt bound to comply with the wishes of either of her aunts, even at some sacrifice to herself; but her present state of mind rendered the thought of appearing among a crowd of strangers harrowing in the extreme; and she endeavored to parry Sabiah's arguments with the words, "But I should not make a fine show. I could n't do any credit to myself or Aunt Margaret either — I do not feel well — I am sad, unhappy, miserable."

She spoke the last words almost at random; but Sabiah, putting a very natural interpretation upon them, replied in a half sympathizing, half expostulatory tone, "Well, child, I suppose you are — a part of the time, at least. It 's not strange you should be. No doubt you are worrying about Harry, and thinking he has come here to run the same rig he did in New York. But, la, you can't help the matter, and it 's no use to think any thing about it. He won't go to the party, you may depend, so it is n't worth while to be troubled about that. It is a beautiful ride out to Mr. Bloodgood's place, and a beautiful place when you get there. Mrs. Paradox just sent round to invite you to go in her carriage, and you can send back word that you will, and so it will be all settled, and you 'll have a nice time, and Margaret will be suited, and —"

Sabiah's enumeration of the happy results of Mabel's compliance was here interrupted by the loud voice of Mrs. Ridgway, calling to her on some household matter, and she was compelled to hurry away, Mabel saying to her as she went, "I

can not go, Aunt Sabiah; indeed, I can not. I wish you would tell Aunt Margaret so."

Quite a new turn was given to the affair, however, when at dinner Harry unexpectedly declared his intention of accepting the invitation.

"That's right, Harry!" cried his aunt Margaret, who, having heard him express his contempt for parties of this description, had scarcely expected he would be prevailed upon to attend. "You won't be the loser by improving your acquaintance with the Bloodgoods, I'll venture to say; there's nobody in this part of the country entertains as they do."

"It is a pleasant drive out there, at any rate," said Harry, with a somewhat indifferent air. "Every body seems to be going. I was introduced to young Bloodgood at the Lake House, this morning, where I went fishing, and he's a right fine fellow. He urged my coming to his father's this evening, and I told him I would. It seems there's a young man in town — I've forgotten his name — some one that has visited here in college vacations and is very popular in the neighborhood, — this affair is got up on his account. He's been somewhere at the other end of the world, and is to start again to-morrow; — just here to have a peep at his friends and then be off."

"Who can it be?" exclaimed Mrs. Ridgway; "Can't you remember his name, Harry? Did you say he was a relation of the family?"

But Harry could tell nothing more; and the curiosity and speculative wonder of his aunt being excited to the utmost, she now rehearsed the Bloodgood pedigree in all its branches, enumerating the ages of all the male members, and endeavoring to fix upon the identical individual whom the family were so eager to honor. The fortune and merits of some half dozen having been fully discussed, and each in turn pronounced the undoubted object of so much attention, she at length arrived at the satisfactory conclusion that, if it was not one of these, it must be somebody else — at all events, somebody of wealth, family, and distinction. "There, Miss, think what you will

lose!" said she sharply, turning upon Mabel, whose interest she had evidently been striving to awaken all the while.

Mabel, who, lost in a reverie, had been conscious of nothing beyond Harry's announcement of his intentions, looked up with an absent air, and when he immediately added, "Why, you mean to go, don't you, May?" she faltered out, "Yes, if you will take me with you."

"Ah, ah!" exclaimed her aunt, in a manner at once taunting and self-gratulatory, "So you can not resist this handsome young stranger. I thought that was all that was wanting — some distinguished guest for whom it was worth while to put on your best smiles."

With only a dim conception of her aunt's meaning, but willing that her change of purpose should be attributed to any thing rather than the real motive, Mabel allowed the remark to pass unchallenged, and even submitted patiently to a succession of similar petty sarcasms, which were coarse rather than ill-natured, for Mrs. Ridgway was too well satisfied with the triumph she had achieved to be intentionally severe. She little suspected, meanwhile, the far greater triumph Mabel had gained over her own feelings in thus consenting to accompany Harry, for whom she dreaded some less desirable companionship if she should indulge her own wishes by remaining at home.

"Now wear something handsome," was the eager and almost imperative remark with which poor Mabel was assailed a few hours later, when, seated alone in her room, with Louise's letter once more in her hand, she had for the moment forgotten the cruel ordeal in store for her that evening. "Come, let me see your dresses;" and, without ceremony, her pertinacious aunt lifted the lid of a travelling-box which contained the richer articles of her wardrobe, and one after another spread them out for inspection.

As might have been expected, she at once made choice of the gayest and richest ball-dress among them all, and Mabel could have cried with vexation at the persevering energy with which she insisted upon her niece's appearing in a costume as

ill-suited to the occasion as to her painfully depressed state of mind. A compromise was at length effected, by which an exquisite flounced muslin was substituted for the gay silken fabric; and although the delicate texture of the former, and its choice trimming and embroidery, rendered it unsuitable in Mabel's eyes for a six miles' drive, she was thankful to have in some degree overruled her aunt's bad taste, and to be allowed to indulge the hope that, clothed in spotless white, she should, at least, fail to be conspicuous.

It was a proud moment for Mrs. Ridgway when Harry's little phaeton drove to the door; when her handsome niece came down stairs, attired in the newest fashion — though she did wish she had put on a gayer sash — when Harry appeared with such beautiful little shirt-frills as she had no idea young gentlemen wore now-a-days; when she accompanied them down to the gate, to tuck in Mabel's dress and spread a shawl across her lap; when Judge Paradox passed by at the moment and bowed; when the neighbors ran to the window to see the young New Yorkers start; and when, finally, the intractable mare, after many vain attempts to get away, dashed furiously down the street, — Sabiah in the meantime standing in the doorway, vexing her poor heart lest Mad Sallie should break Mabel's neck, and she never forgive herself for having persuaded the dear child to run such an awful risk.

CHAPTER XXV.

The ear inclined to every voice of grief,
The hand that oped spontaneous to relief,
The heart, whose impulse stay'd not for the mind
To freeze to doubt what charity enjoin'd,
But sprang to man's warm instinct for mankind.
NEW TIMON.

"HAVE you seen her, Uncle Bayard? tell me, have you?" eagerly exclaimed the animated sixteen-year-old girl, who was seated in the carriage of the member of Congress on the day when Mrs. Ridgway* proclaimed the expected arrival of her guests. This earnest remark was addressed to a tall young man, with a broad forehead, and singularly frank and noble countenance, whom the little fairy had joined, on the evening of the party at Mrs. Bloodgood's house, and playfully caught by the arm while she put the important question.

"Seen who?" asked the gentleman, with a smile which betrayed that he knew very well whom she meant. "Seen who?" repeated the girl with a mocking air. "Oh, now, Uncle Bayard, you need n't pretend; I saw you watching her for as much as five minutes; so tell me, what do you think of her?"

"What ought I to think of her? come, teach me my lesson again, puss," said the young man, evading a direct reply.

"Ah! you need n't ask me, said the pretty little miss, looking archly up into his face. "You have been studying at the fountain head; I saw you in the looking-glass, and you never took your eyes off her for five, — yes, for ten minutes."

"And what was the result? Did you see my thoughts reflected in the mirror too?"

"Yes, — pretty clearly; you thought her the most beautiful, elegant, magnificent creature that ever you beheld in your

life; — if you did n't, I 'll never forgive you. Now tell me," continued she coaxingly, " is n't she splendid? "

" Yes, Bessie, and so is an iceberg."

" Oh, what a cruel, wicked, unjust comparison! " exclaimed the enthusiastic Bessie, resentfully flinging away the hand which in her earnestness she had a moment before affectionately clasped. " You would not say so if you knew her. She is as pleasant and charming as she is beautiful."

" I would n't know her on any account," persisted the provoking Bayard.

" Now why not? " challenged Bessie, throwing back her head with a defiant air.

" I should be afraid of a chill," and he feigned a slight shudder, as if he suddenly felt a current of cold air.

" It is enough to give one a chill to hear you talk," retorted beauty's champion, with spirit. " You do n't deserve to get acquainted with her, and I almost hope you won't have a chance. I won't introduce you."

" A charitable resolution," responded her youthful uncle. I cannot conceive of a greater danger than being brought into collision with that brilliant " —

" Stop! stop! don't you speak that word again," cried Bessie, trying to reach his lips with her little hand.

The tall young man threw back his head, to escape this check upon his freedom of speech, and laughingly continued — " I am ready to admire her to your heart's content, Bessie, — only at a distance, mind."

" Fie, uncle, what a coward! "

" True enough, little Bess, I plead guilty to the charge," said Bayard, assuming a more serious tone than that in which the dialogue had hitherto been conducted. " A man living as I do, where life is plain, simple, and robbed of all conventionalities, learns to love, esteem, and reverence, to the last degree, a warm-hearted, true, devoted woman, one who can quite forget herself in the glow of her zeal for another, as a little friend of mine has done to-night; — but, Bessie, if I read her face

aright, this Miss Vaughan of yours is cold, proud, and self-confident. I confess I am afraid of such a woman."

"O uncle! her smile is bewitching and her manners are full of warmth," exclaimed Bessie.

"But the smile seems to come by rule, and her manners are too studied to be attractive. All the graces in the world will not compensate for the want of natural cheerfulness and simple" — He here checked himself abruptly, as Bessie put up her finger in a warning manner. This time she was evidently in earnest, and a slight rustling movement in the immediate vicinity of the speaker likewise recommended a caution, which had, however, come too late to save the embarrassment which ensued.

The conversation had taken place in Mrs. Bloodgood's library, which chanced to be vacated at the moment by the crowd of visitors which thronged the hall and parlors, and the parties engaged in it had been quite oblivious of the fact, that, standing as they did close to the open folding-doors which led thence into one of the drawing-rooms, every word of their animated dispute could be distinctly heard by any person standing on the other side of the partition. Weary with the unsuccessful effort to rally her wounded and agitated spirits, Mabel had a moment before sought refuge in a recess formed by a projecting mantel piece and the partition wall of the library, and, while ostensibly endeavoring to make the acquaintance of a child permitted to sit up beyond its usual bed-time, she was striving to collect and refresh her scattered senses, and already exhausted powers. It may well be believed that she was but little aided in the effort by the above dialogue, every word of which reached her ears, though until her name was spoken at its close, she had no suspicion to whom it referred. Like a hunted deer, which in seeking a place of rest only finds itself the subject of new and painful embarassments, she started, and without looking in the direction of the voices, crossed with a quick step to the other extremity of the well-filled room, thus putting a little throng of people between herself and the unwary speakers. She had recognized Bessie's lively tones, but those of her uncle were

unfamiliar; and having gained the shelter of the crowd, the impulse was irresistible to look back and discover who it might be who had judged her with so much severity. She had crossed the room in such a direction that she would have been enabled to do this, had Bayard retained his former position, but a like impulse had led him to step within the archway of the folding-doors; and as she timidly lifted her face, suffused as it was with a deep and burning blush, she met the clear, blue, honest eye of the young man fixed full upon her, and her own dropped again instinctively, while her agitation visibly increased as she thus encountered his gaze and felt that her quick movement was understood and appreciated.

Had his good heart experienced anything but pain and regret at his censorious words having been thus overheard, the latter emotions would have been at once excited by the patient, deprecating, reproachful glance of the misjudged and sensitive girl. There was no proud contempt, no haughty defiance in the gentle drooping of the head, the painful blush which overspread her cheeks and brow on thus hearing herself condemned for emotions the very reverse of those by which she was in reality actuated; there was no shade of anger in the countenance which expressed hurt and wounded, but not bitter or resentful, feelings.

"O Uncle Bayard," exclaimed Bessie, as soon as she could recover from her consternation, "she has heard every word!"

"She must have," said Bayard, in a tone which indicated his regret.

The good-natured Bessie forbore to reproach him, though feeling scarcely less grieved than Mabel herself. She experienced a partial triumph, however, when the young man, after following with his eyes the object of his remarks, and watching the quick blood mount to her temples, turned to his little niece and said, "Bessie, she has convinced me, where you have failed. I yield the point, and stand convicted; she is not an iceberg."

It was the concession of a candid, truth-loving mind, but Mabel, unfortunately, could not have the benefit of it, and was left, as many have been under like circumstances, to the

stinging consciousness that a burdened, humiliated, anxious heart, while seeking to hide its oppressive secrets from the unsympathizing eye of the world, too frequently lays itself open to misconstruction and undeserved reproach. But it was some consolation to believe, that, except in one unguarded moment, she had successfully feigned a composure which she did not feel, and this thought once more restoring her to apparent calmness, she continued to measure out her words and smiles, which Bayard, with no little discrimination, had discovered to be artificial and forced. It was a relief, however, when music was proposed, and all save the performers were permitted to relapse into silence.

There were several fine voices among the company, and some popular glees being called for, Mabel readily consented to preside at the piano, and furnish the accompaniment, a difficult accomplishment for one who does not take part in the singing; but, although diffident in respect to her vocal powers, she had an exquisite ear for music, and this had always at school been her disinterested province.

Satisfied with an office which, to one so familiar with it, involved little more than a mechanical effort, and soothed and cheered by the sound of Harry's fine bass voice, which she rejoiced to hear, lending depth to the song, she played a long time without consciousness of fatigue, and finally received, with much of her natural sweetness and grace, the thanks of the group who were assembled around the piano. She still occupied the music-stool, and was engaged in conversation with the senior Mr. Bloodgood, who stood beside her, when she suddenly became conscious that some one was waiting to take her place at the instrument, and looking quickly up, she recognized the individual, who, a little while ago, had made her the subject of his criticism.

Perhaps, as she promptly vacated the place and withdrew outside the circle, he was reminded of the dread he had expressed of her vicinity. If so, however, it must have been his conscience rather than her manner which so reminded him, for she returned his gentlemanly acknowledgement of her rising

with a graceful courtesy, and there was nothing marked or rude in her quietly retreating to a distance.

As the instrument was so situated that the performer faced the company, and she dreaded the embarrassment of again meeting his eye, she purposely strolled through the back parlor into the library, leaning on the arm of her obliging host, who was soon after summoned away by a servant. Thus left alone among strangers, she could not resist listening with pleasure to the slow, impressive, and beautiful symphony which proceeded from the piano, and was inwardly commenting on the taste and skill of the performer, when he suddenly commenced singing; and, as a lull among the company immediately succeeded, the rich, mellow notes of his voice fell upon her ear, the effect seemingly unmarred by distance.

Never before had Mabel heard such music. It was true her enjoyment of the art had been limited, but a far wider experience might well have failed to awaken such impressions as those which were inspired by the strains of this gifted singer. His voice, of great natural breadth and sweetness, possessed, also, the advantage of the highest cultivation, and these qualities were enhanced and their effect heightened in no slight degree by the purity of his enunciation and the expressive power and pathos which he imparted to the words. It was eloquence married unto harmony. He now sang, by request, a glorious air from Rossini's "Stabat Mater," and the effect of the sublime music was evident in the hush which prevailed throughout the rooms, and the strained and eager attention of those even who were not ordinarily susceptible to emotion from a similar source. Though the clear, full notes penetrated through all the lower apartments of the house, Mabel found herself instinctively drawn in the direction whence they proceeded, as if to make sure that they did not have their source in some illusion of the senses, and, half forgetting, wholly disregarding her previous desire to avoid the presence of the young stranger, she noiselessly but unhesitatingly glided through the hall and stationed herself among a little throng of listeners, in the doorway opposite the piano. She had not dared to scan

his face attentively before; now she could not resist doing so, nor could she fail to acknowledge that it was a countenance worthy of the inspired song,—a countenance in which gentleness and force were most harmoniously blended. He might have been five and twenty years of age, though the freshness and fairness of his complexion gave him a more youthful appearance. He wore no beard, and his light, wavy hair was tossed back in some careless fashion, revealing a finely developed and intellectual brow; his full, blue eye was calm, clear, and truthful, and all his features were indicative of resolution and energy. His unusual heighth and breadth of figure, his well expanded chest, and firm, erect position, were all significant, moreover, of physical power and endurance; in short, his whole appearance might be pronounced typical of those ancient northern races, noted both for beauty and hardihood. In proof of this, Mabel was forcibly reminded by his striking exterior, of a picture she had once seen representing some youthful Norsemen of the times of Hengist and Horsa, to one figure in which group she detected in him a marked resemblance.

It added not a little to the effect produced by his music that he sang with no apparent effort, and seemed quite unconscious of the impression produced upon his audience, while the half smile upon his face indicated the joyousness with which he thus gave vent, as it were, to the natural emotions of his soul; and when he at length finished and rose from his seat amid the breathless silence of the assembly, there was not the slightest evidence of triumph in his manner; but receiving without affectation the plaudits of those in his neighborhood, and declining to reseat himself at the instrument, he entered, with respectful earnestness, into conversation with Mrs. Bloodgood's father. The latter, an extremely elderly gentleman, appeared to be questioning him with interest, and listening with attention to his animated replies; while the youngest child of the household, who had leaned against him, looking up in his face while he sang, continued in the same trusting attitude, and suffered him to toss her silken curls with his hand; his relation to both being significant of his rare and beautiful character; for noble firm-

ness of heart and will was in him so united with gentle and cheerful benignity, that he was one whom old men might reverence, and little children love.

Though Mabel might be excused for terming the neighborhood of L. a country district, in comparison with New York, Mrs. Ridgway was right in asserting that no one could entertain company more elegantly than their Member of Congress; and she might also have added, with truth, that no city could furnish a choicer collection of guests than would be sure to assemble at his house. All the most cultivated families for ten miles around were represented, men of political note were present from a still greater distance, and pretty girls and gay young collegians made the time pass merrily; while no pains were spared on the part of the host to render the occasion a memorable one. The beautifully decorated supper-room had been thrown open from the commencement of the evening; and from the moment supper was announced until the company left the house, it was more or less frequented. During the latter portion of the time, however, it was almost exclusively occupied by gentlemen, who, after devoting themselves assiduously to the ladies in the first instance, returned thither to partake of the second course of hot oysters, and drink each other's health with more freedom than they had ventured upon in the presence of their mothers, daughters, and wives. It was with trembling heart that, towards the close of the evening, Mabel lingered near the door of this room, vainly hoping to attract Harry's attention and, under the plea of a long drive, persuade him to return home. He stood directly opposite to her, but the supper-table was between them, and in the increasing hilarity which prevailed she found it impossible to catch his eye, while every moment of delay rendered it more doubtful whether he would regard a sister's summons. Several of her acquaintances passed and re-passed, and more than one invited her to return to the drawing-room; but she persisted in declining, remarking that she found it cooler in the hall. Now and then a loud peal of laughter rang through her ears like a sudden pain, while the rapid uncorking of fresh bottles of wine caused

a nervous shudder to agitate her whole frame. In the midst of a circle of thoughtless young men stood Harry,—no, not Harry,—but the strange, unnatural being that Harry became, when no longer master of himself. The light joke was passing from lip to lip, and each had his foaming glass raised awaiting the coming toast, when Bayard, approaching with a quick step from the drawing-room, passed Mabel without observing her, and stepping to the table took from it a tumbler and a pitcher, which proved to be empty.

"Ah, Lewis!" exclaimed he, to a man-servant who stood near, and whom he evidently knew, "there is no water here; I want a glass of water for Miss Bessie."

The servant took the pitcher to replenish it, and, during the instant of delay which ensued, the young man stood gazing at the convivial group opposite to him, with a serious, contemplative face, which had in it, however, less of contempt than anxiety and commiseration. As the servant presently handed him the glass of water and he started to leave the room, he was followed by two or three of the noisiest of the youths, who, passing through the door-way at the same moment as himself, were heard to say to one another, "Fred has bet with that young New York chap, as to which will drink the most champagne, and Bloodgood is to stand umpire. Fred has beat already; New York is making a fool of himself. I am going to hand my mother into her carriage and then come back and see the sport." At the same moment the voice of Harry within the room boisterously exclaimed, —"Look here, waiter! bring on some more wine."

In the hurry and excitement of their movements, one of the reckless youths who passed through the door at the same moment with Bayard, roughly jostled the arm of the latter, causing a large proportion of the water which he carried to be suddenly spilled on the dress and arm of Mabel, who stood, as we have said, just within the hall. He turned quickly to apologize for the accident; but the words died on his lips as he recognized her and observed the expression of her countenance, realizing as he did, at the same moment, the painfulness of her situation.

Her face was deathly pale, her colorless lips were tightly compressed, and her hand nervously clasped the railing of a hat-tree which was within her reach; while the intense suffering which was written on her features, the earnest, pleading, and half-bewildered look with which she met the eye, now fixed upon her, were such as to excite the tenderest compassion in her behalf.

Unconscious as was this silent appeal on the part of the unhappy girl, Bayard was not the man to be insensible to it; and though she could not have explained the reason, she took encouragement from his answering glance, although he passed on without a word, without even an apology for spattering her hand and arm with cold water; a circumstance for which she could almost have thanked him, since she felt as if it had saved her from fainting.

A moment after, and the brave youth, who feared neither censure nor ridicule in the cause of truth and humanity, had passed through the parlor, disposed of his glass of water, and returning through a side entrance, stood beside his friend Bloodgood, in the spacious china closet, adjoining the supper-room, where the latter had been superintending the unpacking of a new supply of wine, and now held a bottle which he was preparing to uncork.

"Charlie!" exclaimed he, laying his hand on the shoulder of his friend.

Young Bloodgood turned, colored, and became confused, as he met the calm, reproachful eye of Bayard, and answered with some embarrassment.

"Ah! Bayard, — you here? You 'll find a glass" —

"No, no, Charlie," continued Bayard, "you know that is not what I am here for." "Come, added he, coaxingly, "you have proved your hospitality enough to-night; let Lewis keep this out of sight; it is the greatest kindness you can do those fellows."

"Poh, nonsense! Bayard," replied the other; "we are bound to entertain our guests" —

"But not to shame and ruin them. This plot to disgrace a stranger here to-night is scandalous and ought not to go on."

"It's a plot of his own contriving," answered Bloodgood, laughing. "If a man will make a buffoon of himself, he is the best judge of his own conduct and the only sufferer by it."

"Oh, no, Charlie, you are mistaken," responded Bayard, earnestly. "The greatest sufferer is that noble looking, beautiful, unhappy girl, who stands in the doorway with a heart bleeding for her poor brother. I will not see her proud head brought low by his glaring folly and misconduct; I will not look on and not lend a word and a hand to save her from mortification and him from scorn."

A shout of merriment from the next room, and an impatient cry of "What has become of Bloodgood," now caused the well-intentioned, but somewhat irresolute youth to endeavor to parry his friend's arguments, and break away from him altogether, with the lightly-uttered words, "Ah, ha, Bayard! the girl has made a conquest of you, I see, and expects you to run a tilt on her light-headed brother's account; but you cannot expect to make such a Don Quixote of me — a man is not responsible for his guests."

"Bloodgood," exclaimed Bayard, in a tone which had changed from simple earnestness to that of a just and righteous indignation, — "I think a man is, to a great degree, responsible *for* his guests, and *to* them. It is folly for you to talk of any personal interest I can feel in either Miss Vaughan or her brother; I, who have never spoken a word to either, and to-morrow leave this part of the country for as many years, perhaps, as have passed since I was last an inmate of your father's house. But one is a woman, and as such has a claim on your tenderness, and the other is a fellow-man, and is thus entitled to your sympathy. Charlie," added he, in a tone at once affectionate and firm, "we have known each other from boys, have passed our college life and vacations in each other's company, and I have hoped most earnestly to welcome you one day to my distant home; but you and I cannot clasp hands in friendship to-night, or meet as friends in years to come, if you compel me to believe that

you can be indifferent to a fellow being's reputation and his sister's peace."

The young man thus addressed hung down his head for a moment, fumbled with the cork-screw, which he held in his hand, then threw it on the closet shelf, and, with a candor which did him infinite credit, caught the hand of Bayard and shook it with hearty warmth, exclaiming, "Bayard, I cannot afford to lose your friendship; it has been the greatest blessing of my life; this is not the first time you have saved me from folly, if from nothing worse," and energetically kicking the champagne basket underneath the shelf, he locked his arm in that of his friend, and they entered the supper-room together, when Charlie, following Bayard's example, employed himself with ready tact in dispersing the group awaiting him around the supper-table.

"No, no, Fred," said he, shaking his head emphatically, "Vaughan has drank enough, — it is too bad. Boone, I believe your sisters are wishing to say good-night to my mother. Lander, will you come into the library and see the picture I have had taken of my dog?"

Bayard, in the meantime, after intimating to such as would be likely to heed the suggestion, that the young ladies in the drawing-room were wondering what had become of the gentlemen, obtained through Bloodgood an introduction to Harry, and gradually contriving to withdraw him from his now scattering circle of associates, led the way to a little room where coffee was served. As the maniac, or the wild beast, may frequently be calmed and subdued by the power of a fixed eye and a resolute will, so the unfortunate young man, dispossessed at once of reason and self-government, yielded himself, without resistance, to the guidance and control of one who, by a union of persuasion, tact, and unyielding purpose, contrived to gain an immediate and complete mastery over his bewildered and excited mind. With wandering eye and unsteady hand he lifted to his lips the cup of coffee, which Bayard hoped might in some degree serve as a restorative; and then, with a strange mingling of submission and free-will, suffered the latter

to lock his arm within his, and conduct him through a low, open casement, leading to the piazza which ran around the house. Once only, as they left the lighted room behind them, and stepped out into the cool night-air, Harry manifested some slight uneasiness, and a disposition to break away from his new acquaintance; but either the animated conversation, the firm grasp, or the determined eye of Bayard, restrained him from this purpose; for it was abandoned as suddenly as formed, and he made no further opposition to the effectual ascendancy of superior physical and mental force.

From the moment when Bayard thus came to the rescue, until that when he left the house with his self-assumed charge, he was followed by the anxious gaze of the agitated and trembling Mabel. She watched his face, his motions, understood his generous intentions at a glance, read the secret of his power, witnessed his success, and at length, with a heart relieved from an inexpressible weight, comforted herself with the assurance, that come what might, both she and her brother were under safe and certain guardianship.

It was comparatively easy now to rally her self-possession, to converse with the friends, who almost at the same moment claimed her attention, to accompany them to the drawing-room, and once more resume her part in that social scene, which to all but her seemed replete with gaiety and pleasure. From the window near which she stood she could distinguish two tall figures walking slowly up and down at a distance beneath the trees. As if they had been the sentinels stationed without some post of danger, she felt herself animated with new confidence and hope, as at regular intervals they passed and repassed within her sight. So long as they continued thus to pace the grounds, Harry was saved from further exposure, and herself from embarrassment and shame. This knowledge afforded security for the present moment, and beyond that she dared not think.

It was growing late, however. Some persons who lived at a distance had left already, and there was a murmur among the company, such as usually precedes departure. The figures of

the young men were no longer discernible in the dim moonlight, and Mabel began once more to experience a painful uncertainty and dread, which reached its height, when, on looking up, she saw Bayard standing just within the room, unaccompanied by Harry, and apparently looking about him in search of some one. Suddenly he caught her eye, and instantly crossing the room, approached, and spoke in a voice inaudible to any one but herself.

"Miss Vaughan," said he, as if certain of being understood, "your brother is engaged in giving some orders about his horse: if you will allow me the honor, I shall be happy to accompany you to our hostess, and afterwards see you to your carriage."

Unhesitatingly, and without a word, she took his offered arm; in some mechanical manner, she scarcely knew how, said farewell to Mrs. Bloodgood, and with a hurried step ran up stairs for her cloak. He awaited her in the hall on her return, but so hasty had been her preparations for the drive, that when they reachèd the door-step the carriage was not brought up. By this time she shook and trembled violently; the night air was damp and chilly, and Bayard, perceiving her agitation to be such that she could scarcely stand, proposed her re-entering the house for a few moments.

She shook her head to express her unwillingness to return, but did not speak; and he, seeing that she trembled more and more, unfolded a heavy shawl which she had brought down stairs over her arm, and wrapped it around her. As he did so, one or two hot tears fell upon his hand, while a shiver ran through her whole frame, which was not the effect of cold. Unwilling to leave her, and yet anxious concerning Harry, fearful, too, that others of the company would pour out upon the door-steps, he begged her to take his arm again, and proposed that they should walk a short distance in the direction of the stable, to learn the cause of the delay.

With the simple confidence of a child she did as he requested, and just at the rear of the house they encountered Harry, who, engaged in an idle dispute with a groom on the subject of his

mare's harness, seemed quite unconscious that his sister was awaiting his movements. Mad Sallie, meanwhile, irritated and unmanageable beyond her wont, was starting from side to side and now and then plunging furiously forward.

Bayard's presence and prompt interference soon restored harmony, however. Both Harry and the groom were ready to submit their difference to him, and even Mad Sallie was soothed into quietness by his voice and hand, as he spoke gently to her and stroked her mane while he critically examined every point of the harness. "Do not be afraid," said he in a low voice as he handed Mabel into the light vehicle; "I am confident you will reach town in safety." He drew back as he ceased speaking, for Harry, who was already seated in the carriage, had taken up the reins and now incautiously snapped his whip. Mad Sallie started, reared, plunged forward, then backed for a pace or two, and finally dashed off at full speed. The groom held up his lantern once more to see that all was right, and as the carriage swept rapidly round the corner of the house, the glare fell full on the face of Mabel, who had lifted her hitherto bowed head, and turned to bestow a parting glance on her own and her brother's benefactor.

How much of grief and how much of gratitude may be revealed in a single look! Had Bayard's humane and generous deed involved a tenfold effort, and demanded a tenfold sacrifice, his noble heart would have asked no higher reward than the glow of deep, fervent, and grateful feeling which flashed out from that pale, tearful, sorrow-struck face, turned towards him for an instant, and then borne away into the darkness.

"Only by bearing each other's burdens can we read the secrets of each other's hearts," thought he, as he stood listening until the carriage had passed in safety through the gateway at the end of the avenue. "How strangely did I misjudge and wrong that suffering girl."

His mental recantation was interrupted by the blunt voice of the Irish groom. "Go it, yer young rascal;" exclaimed the man, "and the blessed angel beside ye be the savin' o' yer bones".

"Bring up my horse as quick as you can, Patrick," said Bayard, turning abruptly to the fellow, who was starting in the direction of the stable.

"Sure, Misther Bayard, ye'll not be afther goin' to L—— to-night."

"Yes, I have concluded to sleep at the hotel there; and, Patrick, I shall be much obliged to you if you will bring my luggage over in the morning in season for the early train. I will speak to Mr. Charles about it," and so saying he hastened into the house.

Mabel's first sensations as she drove down the avenue and gained the open road, were those only of indescribable relief and deliverance from dreaded danger. But though her brother was rescued from further disgrace, no trifling peril of a far different nature awaited them both. She could not disguise from herself the fact that Harry was incapable of managing his spirited steed or of distinguishing the road, the intricacy of which she well remembered. The night was dark; there was more than one bridge to be crossed, while, at a certain point, their way wound along the verge of a precipitous bank, and was protected only by a slender railing. Fortunately, for the first mile or two the road was wide and unencumbered, so that the rapid pace at which they started was maintained for awhile without disaster of any kind. Then Harry, who had been boisterous and talkative, relapsed into silence, slackened his reins, and suffered the mare to fall into a walk. They proceeded at this rate for some little distance, and were just approaching a point where the road branched, when Harry's head sank upon Mabel's shoulder, and she perceived that he had fallen asleep. Tremblingly she caught the reins as they dropped from his powerless hands, and suffering him to retain his recumbent posture, assumed for the first time and under the most painful circumstances, the responsible office that had thus devolved upon her.

At this crisis, she heard the welcome sound of horses' hoofs, and although in the darkness she could distinguish nothing with certainty, she soon became convinced that for her all

danger was past. A horseman soon overtook them, and then slackening the pace at which he rode, silently performed for the remainder of the drive the combined duties of protector, guide, and friend. At every fork in the road he led the way, and Mad Sallie instinctively followed. At every point of danger he kept perseveringly at the animal's side, and more than once Mabel was conscious that he led her by the rein. Now in advance and now in the rear, sometimes quite obscured in the darkness, and again dimly discerned as he loitered on the brow of a hill, but always near enough for the sound of his horse's feet to be distinctly audible, he might have been deemed an accidental traveller on the road, but for the watchful and efficient care which he exercised over his voluntarily assumed charge. It was a strange situation for a young and delicately-reared girl;—supporting with one arm the sleeping form of him who should have been her natural protector, grasping with her white-gloved and trembling hand the reins which ordinarily she would not have dared to touch, and dependent in the darkness of midnight and the solitude of the lonely road, upon the guardianship of a stranger. Such was the confidence, however, with which Bayard had inspired her, that from the moment when she instinctively realized the presence of one whom in the obscurity she could not otherwise recognize, she experienced an undoubted sense of security, and felt the force of his prophetic assurance, that there was no cause for fear. Not until they gained the partially lit streets of the town did he fail to keep within her hearing. As they rattled over the pavements of the principal thoroughfare, however, the sound of his horse's feet in the rear gradually became more and more indistinct; and Mabel, as she now realized her position more fully by the light of the street lamps, and attempted to rouse her sleeping brother, was almost tempted to believe that she herself had been under the influence of a strange, wild dream, and that their fancied outrider was merely an hallucination of the senses. It was no easy task to arouse Harry's slumbering faculties, and even after they had reached their aunt's door in safety, Mabel hesitated and feared to alight, lest he should prove incapable

of guiding Mad Sallie to her stable at some distance down the street.

Trusting partly to the creature's instinct, and encouraged by some signs of renewed vivacity and intelligence in Harry, who stretched himself energetically, declared it was a deused bore to ride so far at night, and pettishly shook the reins which he had snatched from her hand, she stepped, unassisted and at some risk upon the sidewalk, and stood watching him as he continued on his way. At this moment her doubts, if such actually existed, concerning the reality of their midnight escort were at once dispersed, for as she lingered anxiously in the gate-way, looking down the street, he rode suddenly past her, and disappeared in the direction Harry had taken. Nor was his identity with Bayard any less evident, when, a half-hour later, she cautiously opened the door of her aunt's house to admit her recreant brother, and, as he staggered in, the light shone full on the retreating figure of one who, from first to last, had proved himself a friend.

It mattered not to Mabel that he had misunderstood and falsely interpreted her character. On the contrary, it but added to the heroism of his conduct, that it admitted of no selfish construction, that it was as disinterested as it was manly and humane. He had freely expressed, in her hearing, his unflattering opinion of herself, and of Harry he might almost believe the worst, and yet to both he had acted a Christian part. Mabel was not ungrateful for his kindness to the beauty and the belle, the general admiration of whom he did not profess to share, but it was not for this that she most fervently thanked and blessed him. It was for the benefit conferred on Harry, and through him, on her. It was because he alone of all the world had lent a willing and a helping hand to her sinking, sunken brother.

We rejoice and triumph when the world bestows its homage and its smiles upon our great, our noble, and our virtuous beloved; but the deeper fountains of the heart are stirred when a hand is stretched out in sympathy and in aid to our poor, our fallen, and our sinful ones. We feel that the honor paid to

worth is a sentiment which ennobles humanity; but the voice that whispers of hope to the fallen is more than half divine. Thus, the emotion which Bayard had awakened in Mabel was that of reverent gratitude, and was treasured in after years as a sacred memory. They had met, as it were, on one of the cross roads of life; she dimly comprehended that on the morrow he was to depart into some unknown but distant exile; she had parted from him without a word of acknowledgement or of thanks. Still she felt that for his service to virtue and humanity he would never go unrewarded, and on bended knee, in the silence of the night, she prayed that the God of Heaven might be with him in his wanderings, and that He might minister to him in his hour of need, who has said of the simplest deed of charity, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

CHAPTER XXVI.

> Something was there, that, through the lingering night,
> Outwatches patiently the taper's light;
> Something that faints not through the day's distress,
> That fears not toil, that knows not weariness.
>
> MRS. HEMANS.

MRS. RIDGWAY was very indignant the next morning, when, in reply to her pointed questions, Mabel assured her that she had not been introduced to the distinguished guest of Mrs. Bloodgood, whom she supposed, however, to be a Mr. Bayard, such an individual having been present. So much was the ambitious aunt piqued at this neglect, that she effectually restrained her curiosity, and forbore making any inquiries of her neighbors concerning the stranger, lest she should be compelled to acknowledge that her niece had not made his acquaintance; and thus, much to Mabel's relief, he was not again referred to in her presence.

But the vexation which this circumstance occasioned to Mrs. Ridgway was slight in comparison with the resentment she felt against her nephew, when, in the course of the day, she heard from Hannah, her cook,—who had it from Mrs. Paradox's parlor girl, who had it from Mr. Bloodgood's man, Patrick,—that "the young New York chap, who was a stayin' at the widder Ridgway's, had been pretty considerable sprung," the previous night, and "must have got back to town by a miracle, with his dragon of a baste."

So long as Harry maintained the position of a gentleman, and was courted throughout the vicinity as a foreign-bred youth, of wealth, accomplishments, and spirit, Mrs. Ridgway, prudent as she was in her own affairs, cared not how thoughtlessly he idled away his time, or how recklessly he squandered his

father's money. The moment, however, that he overstepped the outermost limits of that decorum which society enjoins, her worldly-wise sagacity took alarm; and now that she heard his name lightly used even by servants, she began to apprehend that instead of an honor, he would prove a cause of discredit and disgrace to her house. She was not one to be restrained by motives of delicacy from expressing, in Mabel's hearing, her contempt and disgust at what she termed this scandalous exposure, nor did she hesitate to acquaint Harry, by the broadest hints and inuendoes, with her knowledge of the shameful events of the evening, which she declared to be common talk, and against which she inveighed as reflecting not only upon the delinquent, but upon all who had the misfortune to be connected with him.

Whatever indifference Harry might feel or feign at these home thrusts and sarcasms with which he was constantly assailed, they were the cause of the most poignant suffering to Mabel, and the more so as she plainly saw that although apparently listened to by Harry in dogged unconcern, they coöperated with other circumstances in angering and driving him to desperation.

Conscious that he had disgraced himself in the estimation of the respectable portion of the community, feeling it little less than an insult to the venerable Judge Paradox to present himself in the office, where he was but a nominal student, and driven from his aunt's house by her worse than useless invectives, he now gave himself wholly up to a life of excitement, and sought only those associates among whom he was sure to find a ready welcome. Thus, he was sometimes absent for days together; the time of his return was always uncertain, and although his departure was invariably the signal for Mrs. Ridgway to denounce his idle and reckless habits, the ungracious reception which she gave him after every absence, was little calculated to render his excursions from home less frequent or protracted.

The rooms which he had expected to occupy were in a new building, not yet completed. The work might, perhaps, have

been hastened, but neither he nor his aunt cared to press the point, for it was now generally conceded that Harry's residence in L—— was not destined to be permanent. Nothing, however, had been heard from Mr. Vaughan with reference to the probable time of his return, and, although the presence of his children in Mrs. Ridgway's house was fast becoming burdensome, there seemed no other alternative than for them to remain there for the present.

"Do go to bed, child! Dear me, you 'll make yourself sick!" Aunt Sabiah would anxiously exclaim, when creeping cautiously into Mabel's room at the midnight hour, she would find the faithful sister watching at the window for her brother's return.

But Mabel would gently shake her head in reply to her aunt's expostulations, and say, "O no, aunt; I am not tired. I could not sleep."

"There is n't one chance in ten that he 'll come home to-night," Sabiah would, perhaps, rejoin. "You 're getting pale and miserable, and what 's the use, after all?"

"I feel anxious," was sure to be the answer. "He 'll come soon, I think," and with a few persuasive words, Sabiah would be coaxed back to bed, and Mabel would persist in her lonely vigils.

It was a principle with Mrs. Ridgway that her doors should be locked at ten o'clock precisely,—a rule which had been occasionally infringed during the few weeks succeeding the arrival of her young visitors, but which had been rigidly enforced from the time of her becoming acquainted with Harry's irregularities. Thus, it was only by the most unwearied watchfulness that Mabel could ensure her brother's ready admittance; and who shall tell how often the wanderer was beguiled back by the certainty that, come at what hour he might, whether of the night or day, the same gentle voice which had lamented his departure, would greet him at his return, and the same sweet face which had anxiously watched him as he went, would welcome him with a smile, mournful, perhaps, but always kind?

All the fatigues and dissipations of the previous winter had not so weighed upon Mabel's frame and exhausted her strength, as did these prolonged and midnight vigils, when, with straining eye and ear, she thus waited and hoped and prayed. But though the color was each day fading from her cheek, and her step had lost its elasticity, she gained, in these lonely communings with God and her own heart, a power which is born of endurance, and a strength which comes only through suffering. With the world and its bewildering sounds shut out, and the page of duty open before her, she was patiently learning that great lesson of life which is the key to all the rest; and in humble forgetfulness of self, and serene reliance on Heavenly aid, she was gradually divining that precious secret which had rendered Rosy's little life a blessed ministry.

Her willingness both to do and to suffer was soon put to the very test of which she had long had a foreshadowing and presentiment. She was sitting one moonlight night at her accustomed window, which commanded a view of the street, and with her tired head resting on her hand, was listening for the familiar sounds which betokened Harry's return, when she was startled by a vehicle, which was none of his, approaching her aunt's door, and the strange, hurried voices, significant motions and words of caution and alarm which succeeded, served at once to confirm the cruel conviction which had already flashed upon her. The scene was precisely such as her imagination had long since conjured up. Mad Sallie had but executed the destructive work which might well have been anticipated from a refractory beast driven by a mad man, and Harry was brought home insensible, perhaps already bereft of life.

"Don't be scared; I guess he'll come to," said a rough but kindly voice, as Mabel met, at the door, the benevolent farmer and his sturdy sons, when bearing in their heavy burden.

"Oh, he is dead!" exclaimed she, in a hollow whisper, as she fixed her eyes with a rigid stare upon her brother's ghastly countenance.

"No, no, not a bit of it; don't you believe any such thing,"

said the countryman, as having laid the helpless form of the young man on the entry sofa, he took a silk handkerchief from his hat and wiped his heated brow. Then, seeing that Mabel stood like one turned to stone, watching his face as if to read in it her brother's fate, he went on to state in earnest terms his belief that the young fellow was only stunned; that he had spoken since they lifted him from the ground; that he appeared to have no broken bones; that he had been on a bit of spree and was pretty well corned;—no offence to the young woman —he hoped she was n't a near relation of the poor dog whose horse, devil of a beast as it was, seemed to have the most sense of the two; "never you mind," added he, in a truly fatherly tone, patting with his rough hand the head of Mabel, who now leaned over Harry's prostrate form, listening to his feeble but regular breathing — "he 's got a lesson that 's better 'n preachin', — p'r'aps 't'll be the savin' on him, soul and body."

"Bring him up stairs," ejaculated Mabel, in a low, imploring voice; her subdued tones proving, even at this exciting moment, the force of that habit of watchful stillness with which, night after night, she had evaded her aunt Ridgway's hearing.

The precaution was unnecessary now, however. The house was by this time fully aroused, and poor Harry's bearers were met on the staircase by its bustling and voluble mistress, who, but for the old farmer's obstinate resistance, would have compelled them to pause then and there, and acquaint her with every circumstance of the accident, before they were suffered to proceed with their burden. The bustle and confusion which ensued, were such as usually attend similar events in a household, save that in this instance, they were aggravated by the irritation and annoyance which succeeded Mrs. Ridgway's first outburst of astonishment and alarm. Her earliest impulse was, as we have said, to possess herself of every particular; her next, to rid the house of strangers; and her last thought seemed to be of the poor sufferer, over whom Mabel hung, in an agony of suspense, while Sabiah wrung her hands, groaned

and anxiously asked herself — "how will sister Margaret put up with this new trouble?" Mabel, though the most afflicted, was the only one of the household who had the presence of mind to send for a physician or attempt to apply restoratives; and her simple efforts, unavailing as they were, served to calm her mind and render her capable of affording that assistance which the medical man required on his arrival. While Sabiah gave up to the despair which had taken possession of her, and while Mrs. Ridgway examined her parlor carpet to discover whether it had been stepped on by dirty feet, and looked into the kitchen cupboards to make sure that no stragglers had taken advantage of the confusion to conceal themselves there, Mabel held the lamp for the doctor, furnished him with bandages and other necessary articles, replied to all his questions, and received at last the comforting assurance that, except some severe bruises and a slight cut on the back of the head, there was no perceptible injury, and that nothing serious need be apprehended, unless fever supervened.

"Cannot you do something to restore him to consciousness?" she anxiously asked.

The doctor shook his head. "I cannot judge," said he, "how much his present condition is to be attributed to the accident, and how much to previous excitement of the brain. I can tell better to-morrow."

Morning, however, brought no change for the better, and before night the fever, which had been the chief cause of apprehension, set in. Now followed days and weeks of continued nursing, anxiety, and suspense, during which Mabel was the constant and unwearied attendant at the bedside of her brother. As the stupor, in which he had lain for some hours, gave place to feverish excitement, he manifested, in no measured terms, his preference for his sister's presence and care; barely tolerating his aunt Sabiah, and, with fierce imprecations and threats, driving Mrs. Ridgway from the room whenever she ventured to set her foot within the door. From Mabel's hand only would he receive the cooling draught, and to her alone was he gentle and submissive.

The wild words of delirium would die upon his lips as his eye met her loving glance, and his excited gestures would often give place to quiet and repose when he felt the pressure of her soft hand on his burning temples. Sometimes, as she sat patiently by his side through the long watches of the night, he would reveal to her in measured whispers the confession of his past folly, extravagance, and dissipation; gazing into her face meanwhile with a holy awe, as if he believed her some angel messenger sent thither to gather up the burdensome secrets which lay upon his conscience. A less excited imagination, indeed, might almost have mistaken her for an apparition, as, clothed in a long white wrapper, and becoming each day more pale and worn, she moved noiselessly about the darkened chamber, anticipating the sufferer's slightest want, and patiently soothing his restlessness.

Her aunt Margaret, exasperated by the abuse with which Harry assailed her, washed her hands, as she said, of all responsibility in regard to him, and both by her own indignant and unaccommodating spirit, and by the strict orders which she gave her servants, contrived to double Mabel's cares and anxieties, and impress upon her a most painful sense of the difficulties which sickness made in a household. Poor Sabiah, divided between love for Mabel and dread of her sister's anger, hovered stealthily in the vicinity of Harry's room, haunted the staircase and passage-way, and patiently strove to relieve her niece's weariness; but in her perturbed state of feeling, she effected but little in Mabel's favor, and brought down on her own head a torrent of reproaches from Mrs. Ridgway, who, having no other hearer, took every opportunity of expressing to Sabiah a piece of her mind, and declaring that she had no idea of being imposed upon by her relations.

But, although Mabel's task was at once solitary and trying, it had its alleviations. It was far better to see Harry lying there in his helplessness, than to picture him amid scenes of folly and vice; and in the gentle ministries of affection her own bruised and wounded spirit found a healing balm, while in the hearts of both, a silent influence was at work which hallowed

those lonely hours, and made that quiet chamber the nursery of blessed and immortal fruits.

It was about three weeks after the accident, and at the dim hour of twilight, when Mabel, believing her brother to have fallen asleep, threw herself on her knees beside him, and remained awhile lost in meditation and prayer. It had been to her a day of no ordinary suspense. The doctor pronounced his patient to be nearly free from fever, declared that the crisis was past, and gave her encouragement that he would soon be well. This assurance had, however, failed to satisfy her. It was true that Harry now slept quietly, breathed with ease, and took submissively the nourishment that was offered him. Still she felt that there was something about him unnatural and strange. Since he ceased his incoherent ravings, he had not been heard to utter a syllable; and although she was conscious that he watched her continually, he made no reply to her gentle inquiries, and, when she approached him, turned away his head, closed his eyes, and remained in one position for hours. Could his intellect have become dimmed? did he cherish bitter thoughts toward her? or what was the cloud which had thus settled upon him?

Exhausted by harrowing doubts and fears, she had rested a long time with her face shrouded in the bed clothes, and her soul laid bare to the all-seeing Father, when a hand was gently laid upon her head, and a faint, broken voice, murmured, "Mabel." She looked hastily up, and met the earnest, tearful gaze of Harry, fixed full and eagerly upon her. The tender glance, and penitent tones of the chastened spirit were not to be mistaken; he stretched out both his feeble arms, and, with a cry of joy, she fell upon his bosom, and they wept together. As in the days of their innocent childhood, when nestled on one pillow, they had mourned over their little griefs, and soothed each other's little sorrows, so now, with cheek pressed to cheek, every shadow of past estrangement was washed away in a soft rain of tears, while many a cherished hope for the future dawned amid that refreshing dew of sympathy. Not a word was spoken, not an explanatory phrase was breathed by either;

— nor were they needed. In that moment of the heart's recognition, that outpouring of mutual confidence and restored affection, Mabel felt herself repaid for every trial, every sacrifice, every suffering. She had watched, and waited, and hoped, and prayed. In spite of weariness, alienation, disgrace, and sin, led by patience, fortitude, and holy love, she had sought and found her brother.

CHAPTER XXVII.

> From the sun's might, away may the calm planet rove?
> How easy, then, for man to wander from God's love!
> Yet from each circle's point to the centre lies a track;
> And there's a way to God from furthest error back.
>
> RUCKERT.

"HARRY, I promised to give you these as soon as you were well enough. Perhaps you will feel able to look them over to-day," said Mabel, and she put a little bundle of papers into her brother's hand and hastily left the room.

The young man, pale and thin from the effects of his recent illness, but so far recovered as to be seated in an arm-chair at a table from which he had been breakfasting, unfolded the papers one by one, examined their contents, and, with an air of mingled thoughtfulness and shame, spread them out before him. They were bills of various amounts, including many contracted under circumstances of which he had no recollection, and nearly all of a nature calculated to make a sober man blush at his own folly and extravagance; long accounts at a neighboring hotel for dinners and suppers shared by unworthy and ungrateful associates, petty debts contracted at most of the places of resort and entertainment for a dozen miles around, heavy charges at stable-keeper's and blacksmiths, and an alarming balance in favor of an unprincipled horse-jockey with whom he had had frequent dealings. During the hour that Mabel purposely continued absent from the room, Harry sat studying these written records of his own disgrace, anxiously calculating the extent of his creditors' demands, and revolving with still deeper bitterness the far heavier account which lay upon his conscience.

When she at length returned, he was systematically filing

the bills and noting the sum of each on a slip of paper. "Mabel," said he, looking up as she entered, "will you write a note for me to young Bloodgood? My hand is not quite steady yet, and I want to ask him to call and see me this evening, if convenient."

Mabel did as she was requested, and Charlie responded to the summons by presenting himself at an early hour. Harry, who had not yet been below stairs, received him in his own room; and so earnest and prolonged was the conversation between them, that Mabel, as she sat in the adjoining chamber, became fearful that her brother would be over-fatigued, and listened impatiently for the visitor's departure. "Good bye, Vaughan," he was at length heard to say, as he left the room and lingered a moment in the passage-way. "I will see you again in a day or two. There will be no trouble in disposing of the greys. I know of one or two persons who would take them and the phaeton off your hands at any moment. Mad Sallie will bring a better price perhaps in the city, but don't give yourself any uneasiness about the business — I'll attend to it with pleasure. I am glad to find you so much better."

Later in the evening, when Mabel was sitting beside her brother and there had been a short silence between them, Harry exclaimed in a tone of deep and mournful feeling,

"Mabel, do you believe in such a thing as repentance?"

"O Harry," she promptly replied, "what hope would there be for any of us, if we were cut off from that blessed refuge?"

"But I do not mean any common sorrow for a common fault;— do you believe in a repentance broad and deep enough to cover such a record of folly as that?"—and he pointed to the roll of bills—"or to wipe out such a sense of shame and sin as is written here?" and he placed his hand upon his heart.

"Do not doubt it for a moment, dear Harry," replied Mabel, in a tone of affectionate encouragement. "The sin which we have learned to hate is robbed of half its power, and the soul is never so strong as when it realizes its own weakness.

"But the sting of memory!" exclaimed Harry with bitterness; "the burning sting! Can that ever be rooted out?"

"It may become the spur to a higher virtue than we ever dreamed of before. O Harry!" she continued, her voice half choked with sobs and her face hid upon his shoulder, "I know, for I have felt it. Nothing has ever so fortified me against my own weak and selfish indulgence, as the remorse and penitence with which I now look back upon a wasted, misspent, and dissipated winter."

"You!" responded Harry, fondly caressing her, for she was striving in vain to repress her tears; "dear child! What do you know of misspent and dissipated time? You shame me more than ever, when you try to lighten my load by pretending to share it."

"It is no pretence, Harry. I can never forgive myself for being so faithless to a plain and simple duty. We had such a beautiful home, and might all have been so happy together! I might have done so much to make it pleasant for you and my father and aunt! But your prophecy of me was true — I was the first to yield to temptation, and to become the slave of my own vanity and self-love. Yes, it is in vain to deny it — I was not the daughter and sister that I should have been."

"You have been a faithful sister to me, Mabel," said Harry. "If you had a fault in the world, it was because your nature was so open to impressions that, like your poor brother, you were easily led captive; but you women have a deeper insight than we into the depths of human character, and so you can stop short where we must fall, unless some gentle hand follows and upholds us." What a confiding look he gave her while he spoke the last words — proving by it how fully he realized that she was the staff on which he leaned.

She made no reply, and he went on. "There was a time when I thought that the same plausible, treacherous mind that had brought me to the verge of ruin and there left me to stand or fall as I best might, was striving with all his powers to establish an influence over you. I thought you cherished his opinions, trusted his false professions, and would sacrifice every other friend for one whom all must acknowledge to be the most insinuating of men. I knew my interference would fail to

open your eyes, for he was the chosen companion of my better days, and it was I who had filled your ears with his praises. The self-willed, ruined dog (for so I once heard him call me) could not hope to establish his testimony against the accomplished, spotless Dudley. But instinct taught you, I believe, to repel the hypocrite, and something better than instinct bids you cling to the poor dog, who is at least sincere when he tells you how much he loves you."

Mabel clung to him the closer, but was silent.

"Yes," continued he, with forced and bitter composure, "I have no right to blame any one but myself for my fall; but if there is one man more than another who is in any degree responsible for it, it is Lincoln Dudley. It was he whose elegant taste for play first led me to the gaming-table; whose systematic self-indulgence fostered in me the love of wine; whose professed idleness robbed me of all impulse to exertion, and whose sceptical principles made me question the very existence of virtue. He would leave the gaming-house with moderate winnings, while I had staked and lost every thing; he would coolly drain the bottle, one glass from which had set my hot blood to boiling; and when at last, in some unguarded moment, I had betrayed my weakness, this polished favorite of society was the first to point at me the finger of scorn, and drive me to desperation by his contemptuous neglect. I deserved contempt, but not from him. Nor was it the least of my torments that, while turning his back upon me, he dared offer his unworthy homage to the person I loved best in the world. Thank Heaven, Mabel, you had the discernment and the strength of mind which are needed to understand and cope with such a man."

"O Harry," exclaimed Mabel, making an effort to speak, only as she felt herself called upon to disclaim this tribute of praise, "I am not the strong-minded girl you think me. I did not question his sincerity. I believed him everything that was noble and true. I would gladly believe him so still, but I cannot."

The tone of her voice betrayed her; it told of misplaced

affection, disappointed trust, and weariness of spirit. Harry put his arm around her, drew her face close to his, and whispered, "You gave him up for my sake?"

"I could not find it in my heart to leave you alone, Harry," was her simple answer.

"Bless your loving heart, Mabel," responded he, kissing her tenderly; "Dudley and I are alike unworthy of it."

This conversation, serving as it did to throw new light upon the cold and artificial character of Dudley, had at the same time the effect of sensibly weakening the hold which he still had upon Mabel's interest and imagination. Conscious as she was of his duplicity towards herself, she was still more deeply shocked as she contemplated the faithlessness of his once boasted friendship for Harry, and she henceforth began to realize that in freeing herself from the influence of this selfish and worldly-wise man, she had secured her own no less than her brother's welfare.

It was one morning towards the end of August when Harry, who had now wholly recovered, entered his aunt Ridgway's sitting-room with a New York paper in his hand, and glancing over the items of intelligence, read them aloud for the benefit of his aunt Sabiah and Mabel, who were seated there.

"Regatta next week at Cape May — Disastrous fire in Canal street — Splendid fancy ball at Newport, — the beautiful Mrs. Leroy of New York one of the belles of the evening."

"More shame for her," muttered Sabiah, in an under tone. "Where's her husband, I wonder?"

"Shocking railroad accident," continued Harry, disregarding the interruption; "nineteen persons killed and wounded."

"Oh, dear, how common those things are becoming!" said Mabel. "Where was it, Harry?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the latter, making no reply to the question, and turning suddenly pale.

"What is the matter?" cried Mabel in alarm. "Did the accident happen at the West? Father" —

"Father is safe," said Harry, at once relieving her fears, — "but Mr. Leroy" —

"Is killed?" gasped Mabel, with a countenance full of dread, while Sabiah laid down her work and stared at Harry with strained and horror-stricken features.

Harry answered by covering his face with one hand and passing Mabel the paper, with his thumb on the following paragraph: —

"We regret to learn that our esteemed fellow-citizen, Alexander Leroy, Esq., was among the victims of this fatal catastrophe. Mr. John Vaughan, a well-known and highly respected merchant of our city, was also a passenger on board the train, and, at the moment of the accident, occupied the same seat with his son-in-law, Mr. Leroy; but the former providentially escaped with only a few bruises, while the latter was instantly killed."

Mabel ran her eye hastily over this account, and, as she read the partial confirmation of her fear, uttered a low cry, and handed the paper to her Aunt Sabiah. Not a word was spoken for some minutes, — all seemed struck dumb by the sudden and awful nature of the shock, and solemn thoughts chased each other through the minds of each.

Thanksgiving for her father's deliverance was mingled in Mabel's mind with horror and grief at the sudden death of Mr. Leroy; and in spite of her sister's cold-hearted frivolity, she shuddered as she thought of the heavy blow which awaited, if it had not already reached, her. Perhaps Harry experienced the same train of thought, for he at length broke the silence by the abrupt inquiry, "Mabel, where is Louise?"

"I do not know," replied Mabel; "I wish I did, so that I might go to her."

"She is not at Newport, then?"

"No. She was to give up her rooms the day after the ball, and either visit the Earles at West Point, or go to Cape May with Mrs. Vannecker, — it was quite undecided when she wrote last."

"You will stay here then, I suppose, until you hear from

her," said he; "but I think I had better go immediately to father."

"Yes, do, Harry," replied Mabel eagerly; "he may be more hurt than we suppose; at all events, he will need you. Oh, how I wish we could learn the particulars, and be sure of his safety."

Mrs. Ridgway at this moment entered the room, and seeing the unusual agitation which was written in every countenance, exclaimed with her wonted abruptness, "Well, what's to pay here? Sabiah, what's given you such a long face?"

Sabiah gravely communicated the intelligence to her.

"Upon my word," cried she, "brother John has had a narrow escape. And so that gad-about of a Louise is left a widow, is she? Well, I daresay she has not found it out herself yet. The blow that reaches her has got to strike her on the wing."

No one, not even Sabiah, felt disposed at this moment to echo Mrs. Ridgway's remark, while the roughness of her words and manner grated so painfully upon Mabel's overcharged feelings, and she hastened to her own room to give vent to the emotions which she could no longer control.

An hour or two afterwards she was joined by Harry. He had made some inquiries concerning the route which it would be advisable for him to take, in order to reach the distant scene of the accident in the shortest possible time, and had decided that it would be best to start that evening. Mabel could not but perceive, even at this agitating season, that he seemed inspired with new energy, by the sudden necessity for exerting himself in other's behalf; nor could she help hoping, that in the breaking up of evil associations, and the escape from the scene of his recent mortification, he would gain new strength for carrying out his earnest and manly purpose of reformation.

By the judicious management of young Bloodgood in the sale of Harry's horses and their expensive equipment, a sufficient sum had been raised to defray his numerous debts. There was but little remaining, however, and he was obliged

to beg assistance from Mabel's purse, to furnish him with funds for the journey. Proud of the promptness with which he had rendered justice to his creditors, and feeling this expedition to be one in which they had a common interest, Mabel would gladly have transferred to him every cent of her ample supply of pocket money. But he would receive only what his actual expenses demanded, forcing back the rest into her hand, and saying, "You forget how much you may need it yourself."

It had been agreed that Mabel should write to Louise at both the points where a letter might possibly reach her, and that, until she had some certain knowledge of her sister's plans, she should remain at L., to which place Harry's letters should be directed, whenever he had anything to communicate.

Two days after her brother's departure, Mabel's suspense was to some degree relieved by a few hasty lines from her father, dated from a Western post-town, and simply confirming the fact of Mr. Leroy's death, and his own safety.

The next mail, also, brought tidings from Louise. Mrs. Vannecker wrote from Cape May, stating that Mrs. Leroy had accompanied her thither the preceding week, and had learned the terrible news the day after her arrival.

"She bears the stroke with more composure than I had expected," added Mrs. Vannecker. "At times she is excited and hysterical, but for the most part she is tolerably cheerful, and allows herself to be comforted and consoled by the attention and sympathy which she receives from every one in the hotel. Alick seems to feel his father's death, but Murray, poor child, is too young, I suppose, to realize the loss. Louise is now asleep on a couch in my room. When she awakes, she will add a postscript in reply to your sweet, affectionate letter which was received last evening."

Mrs. Leroy's postscript consisted of a strange medley of self-compassionating and congratulatory phrases, the former, that she had experienced such a cruel shock to her nerves, and lost such a kind, indulgent husband; the latter, that she had foreseen this or some similar catastrophe, and had wisely refused to accompany Mr. Leroy into that shocking Western

wilderness. The only really coherent passage was that in which she deprecated the idea of her sister's coming to Cape May where the house was so crowded, on account of the approaching regatta, that it would be impossible to obtain any accommodation. She expected to return to New York in the course of a week or two; should be glad to have Mabel meet her there, and would write again to let her know when she should leave the sea-side.

The next ten days were weary ones to Mabel. She seemed to be oppressed by a fever of the spirits, and to be weighed down by some haunting fear. She found it impossible to rally her cheerfulness notwithstanding Mrs. Ridgway's declaration that it was nonsense to pretend she was so much overcome by the death of Mr. Leroy, who could have been little more than a stranger to her. The violence of the shock she had received, a not unreasonable anxiety concerning her father, and a painful sense of the impropriety of her sister's situation at a public watering-place, all acting as they did on a system weakened by protracted labors in a sick-room, might well account for this seemingly unnatural depression. But so heavy was the cloud which hung over her mind during this interval, that Mabel was afterwards tempted to believe it a foreshadowing of the calamities about to ensue.

A letter, at length, arrived from Harry, and with it an awkward, square-shaped epistle, directed in a strange, unsteady hand, and post-marked New York. In her eagerness to learn the contents of the former, Mabel threw the latter aside, while she perused her brother's communication. It ran as follows:

"Dearest May:—After three days and nights of constant travelling, I arrived at the miserable town from which father wrote to you, and found him wretchedly accommodated in a mere barn of a place, every tolerable room in the tavern, and every spare corner in the few private houses, having been appropriated to those of the passengers who were more seriously injured. Father's escape seems almost miraculous, as he was in the front car, which rolled over twice as it fell down

the embankment. He has suffered considerably from a bruise on his back, and a sprain in the ancle, which made him quite helpless for a few days. He has, also, had an uncomfortable sensation of dizziness in the head, but that is merely the natural effect of the jar, and has already begun to subside. Do not be anxious about him, for I flatter myself I make a capital doctor, nurse, cook, and housekeeper, all of which offices have devolved upon me.

"As soon as he could be moved without pain, we came to the farm-house, situated on father's property, where he and Mr. Leroy have had a temporary residence this summer. It may truly be termed a lodge in the vast wilderness, for though situated on a street of imposing breadth, in the heart of an extensive township, the place is literally a city in prospective, a few straggling houses constituting the village, while a wide, rolling prairie stretches from the rear of our habitation to the verge of the horizon. The situation, however, is at once grand and picturesque; for on the western side we overlook a beautiful, winding river, whose well-wooded banks form a refreshing belt of shade, and in the grove, which is but a short walk from the house, we have buried poor Leroy. You would be amused with our house-keeping. The man who has had charge of the place is unmarried, and we keep a complete bachelor's hall. The house, however, is convenient, and has been tolerably well fitted up during the summer campaign, so that, although we are not luxuriously accommodated, we are very comfortable; as much so, at least, as men can be independent of woman's genius and aid. I tell you this because we shall probably remain some time in our present quarters, and you will be desirous to know how we are situated.

"Father's affairs, which were somewhat involved, are rendered more so by Mr. Leroy's sudden death. I find I can be of essential service, especially as an amanuensis, and shall not think of leaving him until his business is settled. He seems to take it for granted that you will continue in L. for the present, and that Louise will remain at the sea-side, or go to some quiet boarding-place in the country. If we should be detained

here into the winter, however, which I have little doubt will be the case, he will probably suggest some other plan. At present he is too weak, and too much harassed by perplexities, to decide upon anything more than a temporary arrangement. I cannot bear to think, dear May, of your being subjected any longer to Aunt Ridgway's over-bearing temper and restrictions. I can almost believe you would be happier here, where, at least, one is independent. This is indeed a glorious country. I feel a larger life stirring within me, when I breathe the free air of these noble woods and prairies. It inspires me with new energy, and gives me strength to believe that with God's help I may yet live to some worthy purpose, and that my darling sister may never again have cause to weep at the disgrace of her brother, HARRY."

It is doubtful how long Mabel might have sat pondering the contents of Harry's letter, and especially its final clause, had not her aunt Ridgway, as she crossed the room, observed the other document laying in her niece's lap, and exclaimed, "What a queer looking letter! Missent twice," added she, as she took it up and surveyed it with those keen eyes which had never yet required spectacles. "Strange that anybody who could write at all should n't know how to spell the name of this town."

Mabel's curiosity being thus reawakened, she tore open the letter. It was from Lydia Hope, and dated a week back.

"DEAR MISS MABEL," wrote Lydia, "I 'm afraid you do n't know that Mrs. Leroy is very sick at the hotel here in New York. I hated to frighten you, and did n't know how to tell you of it without; but mother says you ought to know, for it would n't be like you not to come right away. When she first took sick, Cecilia sent for us, and we 've been here ever since. Cecilia has gone back to Cape May to wait on another lady. Mother does the best she can, and I try to be of some use. The folks in the hotel are very good, and the doctor comes ever so often; but he can 't seem to help her, and she 's getting

very bad. Oh, Miss Mabel, we wish you were here, and we hope you will start as soon as you get this.

"Very dutifully and respectfully yours,

"LYDIA HOPE."

With a trembling heart, but maintaining, nevertheless, that self-command and energy with which a strong mind braces itself to meet every emergency, Mabel at once prepared to obey this trying summons. There was no time to be lost, for she might already be too late to render any assistance to poor Louise; and her resolution to depart immediately, was equally unshaken by her aunt Margaret's inveighing against the solitary journey, as being the height of impropriety, and her aunt Sabiah's tearfully remonstrating against the exposure to a disease which she felt sure was something contagious. By starting a little before day-break the next morning, she could reach New York at night-fall; and whatever dread she might at another time have felt at the thought of travelling unprotected and alone, the still greater dread of delay banished every minor consideration.

Mrs. Ridgway, who, if she agreed with Sabiah on no other point, shared all her prejudices against Louise, and felt for her neither affection nor sympathy, took more than one opportunity of protesting that this hot-headed proceeding on Mabel's part was entered on with her entire disapprobation, and that she never again would undertake the responsibility of having young people in her house. As this expression of her resolution was still further enforced by the energetic orders which she that evening gave her servants, in Mabel's hearing, to take up the carpets the next day, and otherwise prepare to renovate the rooms which had been occupied by herself and Harry, Mabel plainly understood that she had nothing further to expect from her aunt's hospitality; and when, therefore, she drove from the door, in the dim morning light, it was with the full consciousness that she was bidding the town of L. a final adieu.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The songs of joy are funeral cries become,
And luxury's board is covered with a pall;
The chamber of the banquet is a tomb;
Death, the pale autocrat, he rules o'er all.

DERZHAVIN.

IT was between eight and nine o'clock in the evening, and an unusual bustle prevailed in the lower hall and offices of a popular New York hotel. It was the principal season for Southern and Western travel; the British mail steamer had come to her dock that morning; the coaches were just driving up from the Eastern railroad, and porters, waiters, and other officials were clattering over the pavement and jostling each other in the passages. A boy about nine years of age was leaning heavily over the bannisters of the wide staircase, his listless attitude and gloomy countenance betokening his indifference to the exciting scene which was transpiring below, while a younger and gayer little fellow, mounted on the clerk's desk, was smoking a cigaretto, and declaiming, in a droll, bombastic style, for the entertainment and applause of a crowd of idlers, who now and then interrupted him with cheers and peals of laughter.

"Hallo! hold on! give us some more, young America," shouted several voices, as the little orator, flinging away the cigaretto with which he had been bribed, made a sudden effort to spring from the arms of the individual who supported him on his elevated platform.

"Let me go, let me go," cried the boy, struggling lustily to escape; "my aunt Mabel has come,—I see my auntie; let me go, I say."

"Don't keep the boy from his auntie," exclaimed one or two of the spectators, at the same time turning to give a broad stare

at Mabel, who had been observed by Murray the moment she entered the hotel, but whose face was hid as she now stooped to embrace the eager child. The light laugh and the meaning whisper which succeeded, gave place to respectful silence, however, as Mabel glanced around with grave and dignified wonder, and then, with the boy still clinging to her neck, hastened up the staircase.

Alick did not advance to meet her as she approached; he even tried to hide his face; but when she took his forehead between her hands and tenderly kissed him, questioning him, meanwhile, with her earnest look, he uttered a smothered cry, and, grasping her by the dress, followed, sobbing.

"Take me to my mamma, Aunt Mabel," cried Murray, vehemently; "they won't let me see my pretty mamma." Not daring to breathe to the children the question which trembled on her lips, Mabel hurried on in the direction of the rooms her sister had been wont to occupy, and, as she turned a corner, encountered Lydia Hope, who, hearing Murray's voice, had hastened to meet and quiet him. In the dim light, she did not recognize Mabel, until the latter caught her by the hand and said, in a low, unnatural voice, "Lydia, how is Mrs. Leroy? is she living?"

"O Miss Mabel, is that you?" cried Lydia; "you have come at last."

"Is she living?" asked Mabel, repeating her inquiry, as she observed that Lydia evaded a direct reply.

"Yes, she is; I can just say that," replied Lydia, with hesitation; "but — Oh, he must n't go in," added she, interrupting herself, in a distressed voice, as Murray attempted to rush past.

"Stop, Murray; stop, darling," exclaimed Mabel, intercepting and staying him in his progress. "I will go and see if you can come in, and will come back by-and-by and tell you. Alick will try to amuse you, and so will Lydia. Stay with them, Lydia, and coax them down for a few minutes, if you can," she added, in an under tone. "I will go in by myself."

How the paltry distinctions and petty vanities of life disap-

pear before that mighty leveller which overleaps the bulwarks of custom, and tramples into the dust the boasted elements of beauty, power and pride! Disease, which spares neither prince nor beggar, now reigned triumphant in that apartment, where, a little while ago, fashion and luxury had held undisputed sway. The spacious mirrors were shrouded, lest they should reflect too vividly the harrowing scene within. The appliances of dress and ornament had given place to the stern necessities of illness, and the rich draperies that shaded the windows and couch had been removed for the freer admission of air. All these were signs of the desolation and fear which cometh like a whirlwind; but what were these to that deeper seal which was set on the face of her against whom the fiat had gone forth! Though believing that she had armed herself against the worst, Mabel felt all her powers paralyzed with horror, as entering the chamber, unwarned and unannounced, she beheld the face and form of her who, but a few weeks before, had graced the dance and been the ornament of the ball-room. Her beautiful wavy hair was cut short to her temples, the once laughing eye was sunken, fixed and glassy, a deep red spot mounted in each hollow cheek, while a dark line around the mouth gave added ghastliness to the countenance. The little hand, no longer graceful and bewitching in its gestures, now nervously clutched the counter-pane; the breath was short and interrupted, and a vehement, and, at times, incoherent muttering, betrayed the disordered mind. The grave physician, stationed at the bedside, with his fingers on the feeble pulse, shook his head discouragingly, as the widow Hope applied to the dry lips of the patient a spoonful of liquid, which she had no longer the power to swallow.

Heart-rending as was this picture, its painful effect was still further enhanced by the nature of the wild words which burst at intervals from the poor sufferer, who retained, even in this awful moment, the imperfect power of speech. "What! give up my beautiful rooms!" exclaimed she, in a strained and hollow tone, "and go out into that dreadful prairie! No, no, I say; I will not bury myself in the country! Do you hear me,

Mr. Leroy?" — then, again, after a few low mutterings, her wandering thoughts seemed to take a different turn, and she cried out as if disputing a contested point; "They shall not take my jewels — no, nor my plate! Diamonds are not property; they cannot be seized to pay his debts!" and then, exhausted by this outburst, her clenched hands dropped powerless and her lips suddenly closed.

With form bent forward, and eyes dilated with sudden fear and dread, Mabel stood for a moment unobserved, just within the doorway, taking in at a glance the whole agonizing scene; then a sudden faintness seized her, a film overspread her sight, her heart seemed to cease its beating, and she sank upon the floor.

They carried her into the next room, where she was speedily restored to consciousness, and having drank a cup of tea (for she had fasted since morning), she was enabled to overcome her temporary weakness, and assume a composure which, with heroic effort, she succeeded in maintaining to the end.

"You have arrived at a distressing hour, Miss Vaughan," said the physician; "is there no one whom you would like to send for, to be with you to-night?"

Mabel thought a moment, then shook her head. Among her wide circle of acquaintances there were none whose presence could sustain her at such a moment; and, looking gratefully at Mrs. Hope and Lydia, she answered — "No one; I have no better friends than these."

It was a terrible night. A violent thunder-storm came on, and seemed to shake the house to its foundations; the inmates of the hotel were excited and noisy; a number of arrivals and departures served to increase the tumult; and few, if any, who shared that public shelter, enjoyed an hour's repose.

And while the lightning flash and the reverberating roar caused many a heart to tremble, while the wind rattled the window-panes and whistled through the chimneys, while doors banged loudly and hurried footsteps tramped across the marble floors, and voices shouted from the halls below, and bells rang in angry rivalry from every quarter of the building, and heaven

and earth seemed alike contentious, a fiercer conflict still went on within those narrow walls where an imprisoned soul sought to burst its tenement of clay; and amid the noise, the hurry, the discord, and the strife, the flattered favorite of fashion and the world encountered the merciless foe, did battle with the keen destroyer, experienced the last dread struggle and the mortal agony.

"If I can be of any use to you, I beg you will command my services, Miss Vaughan," said the gentlemanly, but somewhat formal physician, who had spent the night at the hotel, but whose professional attendance being no longer required was about to take leave.

"You will send the person of whom you spoke?"

"Yes. I have already despatched a messenger for him; he is usually employed on these occasions, and will see that every thing is properly arranged."

"Thank you; that is all the assistance I require," said Mabel, and the medical man bowed and left her.

She went and lay down on the foot of the children's bed, — not to sleep, but to be still and watch the peaceful slumber to which she herself had soothed them. She was there when they awoke, and when, amid their morning caresses, they questioned her concerning their mother, she gently told them the truth.

"Mamma is dead, and so is papa," said Murray, "and so is Rosy. But auntie, you wrote us in a letter that Rosy had gone to a beautiful world, and so then has my mamma! And I shall go too, one of these days," added he, with a sort of triumph. "Oh, won't they be glad when they see me coming!"

Alick did not speak, he only wept; not because he had more reason than Murray to love his parents — but because his heart was more deeply sensitive, and his mind mature beyond his years. He could not be comforted, nor would he give any reply to Murray's often repeated inquiry why he cried.

Mabel was soon obliged to leave them, being summoned to meet the individual whom the doctor had sent to her assistance. She listened calmly and patiently while, taking the matter into his own hands, he informed her that he needed no directions; he

understood the circumstances perfectly, and knew what the occasion demanded; — what would be expected from Mrs. Leroy's position in society, — and should see that the whole ceremony was conducted with taste and elegance. It was a sad thing, he added, that Mr. Leroy should have been taken off so suddenly, and left his affairs insolvent too — Mabel here gave a slight start of surprise; she need not fear, however, that he should regard this circumstance in his arrangements, for he had faith to believe, in spite of reports to the contrary, that her respected father was not so deeply involved but that he would retrieve himself, and be happy to meet every demand.

"The only wishes I have in this matter," said Mabel, with difficulty concealing the alarm and embarrassment excited by these inuendoes, "are, that my sister's funeral should be conducted as simply as possible, and should take place from my father's house."

She was answered by a look of utter astonishment, and the abrupt words, "Is it possible, Miss Vaughan, that you are ignorant of the sale which took place last week; your father's estate was put up at auction, and knocked off at considerably less than its value, I should judge."

"Sold! Are you sure?" asked Mabel. "I speak of the family residence in town."

"Certainly; I am not likely to be mistaken," replied the man, whose authority in all matters connected with the good or ill fortune of his patrons was seldom called in question, and who felt, therefore, a little piqued at the implied doubt. "It all went under the hammer; house and contents. I heard there were some orders sent on in regard to pictures and other ornamental articles, but they came too late, and nothing could be reclaimed. It is very unfortunate, to be sure," continued he, in a tone of compassion, but studying her face meanwhile with vulgar curiosity; — "these little knick-knackeries that one naturally sets by, are the very things that give a certain style to an establishment, and our rich upstarts that snap at such a wholesale chance would not part with one of them — no, not if they had come down from your great-great-grandfather."

He would have declaimed still further on the subject, but Mabel, shocked at the unexpected revelations thus made through a stranger, unwilling to accept condolence from such a quarter, and only anxious to terminate the conversation, interrupted him before he had time to proceed. "I have been in the country," said she, with an air of reserve, "and had not become aware of these particulars; they are of no consequence at present. If the house has been disposed of, as you say, the funeral will, of course, take place from here;" and, leaving to him the furtherance of all other arrangements, she hastened from the apartment.

In the hall, she met a porter with a trunk upon his shoulder, and the next instant encountered a gentleman, who was just vacating a neighboring room, and who, coming hurriedly out with a cloak over his arm, had nearly run against her in the passage. He stepped politely aside to let her pass, and commenced a graceful apology, but checked himself with ill-disguised embarrassment; and for once, the courtly and accomplished Dudley (for he it was), stood humbled and awed in the presence of the young and unsophisticated girl. Not that Mabel, in this moment of mutual recognition, made any assumption of arrogance or disdain, or that indifference had already succeeded to her first romantic preference; but sorrow has a dignity all its own, and great calamities calmly met, and solemn duties bravely done, set a seal upon the countenance which may well make the selfish and the worldly tremble. Thus, while she returned his awkward salutation with forced but serene composure, and the blood, which rushed wildly to her heart, never tinged the marble pallor of her cheek, the self-convicted man of the world shrank from her glance as if it had power to penetrate to the depths of his cowardly soul, and felt himself abased by the consciousness that he was detected in the very act of wilfully forsaking, in her hour of need, one whom he had once professed to love; for Dudley had arrived the previous night, had learned, in common with the rest of the household, the sad events of the last few hours, and was seeking, by an abrupt flight, to excuse himself from any call upon his sympa-

thy or aid. So heartless were the calculations and so contemptible the devices of this self-seeking, time-serving man, who, never knowing a genuine emotion himself, was as incompetent as he was reluctant to enter into another's woes.

It was in vain, therefore, that he strove to rally his self-possession. Mabel had the superiority and she maintained it; and when, after a bow of feigned solemnity in deference to her bereavement, and a gesture of imperative haste as an apology for his brevity, he kept on his way with a downcast eye, which had ventured to meet hers for an instant only, she looked after him less in anger, less in pride, and less in wounded affection, than with the generous compassion which virtue must ever feel for meanness and duplicity.

"Poor, dear child!" exclaimed the widow Hope, who met her at the door of the children's bed-room, where she had once more sought a safe place of refuge; "you look dead beat, and no wonder, poor lamb! How Rosy would have felt to see you in such a strait as this!" and the widow wiped her eyes. "Come, lie down again, and let me fetch you some breakfast. Lyddy has taken the children down to get some, and I told her to keep them out of the way for a while, so that you might manage to get a nap."

Utterly exhausted in heart and mind, Mabel had not the strength to resist the persuasions of her kind friend; so she ate without appetite a few morsels of food, and permitted herself to be coaxed into putting on a wrapper and lying down in a darkened room. How long she thus lay quiet and undisturbed she scarcely knew, for although slumber never once visited her senses, thought was sharpened to such intensity as to forbid her taking note of time; and so unconscious was she of all that was passing around, that she gave a start of surprise when, after the lapse of some hours, she opened her eyes and saw the good Mrs. Hope, who believing her to be asleep, was patiently watching beside her. That these hours of quiet meditation had not, however, been fruitless in resolve, was at once made evident by the conversation which ensued between the care-

worn but heroic girl and her humble but faithful counsellor and friend.

"Mrs. Hope," said Mabel, speaking with calm decision, but at the same time looking fixedly in the face of the widow, as if to judge of the effect of her announcement, "I intend to take the boys and go out West to my father."

"You do n't really mean so, Miss Mabel," said the widow in a deprecating tone, but looking less surprised than had been anticipated by her hearer.

"I have been thinking it over," continued Mabel, "and have come to the conclusion it is the best thing I can do."

"Well, Lyddy said perhaps you 'd be for going out there," remarked the widow, "but, laws me, it seems such a long way off."

"Yes, it is a long journey," said Mabel, rising from the bed as she spoke, with a countenance and manner which were suggestive of the fresh energy inspired by the greatness of the enterprise, "but I am not afraid, Mrs. Hope. Alick and Murray will be brave little travellers, and I have learned already that in this country a lady can always depend on the public for kindness and protection."

"Dear me, what would your pa say," asked Mrs. Hope, "if he knew you had such an idea in your head?"

"He does not, of course, know how I am situated," said Mabel, "and I can not be sure what he would think best; so I am obliged to judge for myself. We have no longer a home in New York; I cannot take the children to my aunt Ridgway's, even if I felt at liberty to go back there myself; I can not stay here or anywhere else in the city; besides," continued she, as if bringing forward the strongest point in her argument, "my father needs me — I am sure of it. He is still suffering from the accident, and has nobody but my brother to nurse him; they both need my help, and I must go."

"Go where, mother?" asked Lydia in a whisper; "out West?"

She had come in unperceived, and Mabel could not but observe the earnestness of her inquiry.

Mrs. Hope nodded in assent. Lydia looked significantly at her mother, whispered again, and then turned away and busied herself at the other end of the room. Mrs. Hope hesitated, and Mabel, perceiving that she wished to make some suggestion but was waiting for encouragement, said, with a faint attempt at a smile, "What is it, Mrs. Hope? tell me."

"Why, we were thinking," said the widow, — "that is, we were talking it over this morning — and if we felt sure you would not take it amiss — Lyddy has a friend — I mean *we* have a friend, who is going out West day after to-morrow."

"Well, Lydia," said Mabel, "and what of this friend?"

Lydia did not look round nor answer; the tips of her ears were very red, and she pretended to be exceedingly busy — so her mother saved her the necessity of replying. "Why, he is a very clever fellow," said the latter, "and knows his place. Yes, Owen is too proud to be presuming, and he knows all about the railroads and steamboats, and you might be sure he'd do his best to be of service and take care of your baggage and so on."

Mabel now understood that these thoughtful friends had foreseen the probability of her projecting this long and trying journey, and were anxious to provide her with a trusty attendant and escort. So far from being offended at the proposition, she thanked them cordially for their considerate kindness, and reserving any decision in the matter, expressed a wish to see the young man, who, she was told, would be at the hotel that evening. Accordingly, when Owen Dowst presented himself, and Mabel recognized in him the ruddy teamster who had been Rose's friend, she at once decided in her own mind to accept his protection, which was offered with a respectful civility accompanied by manly independence.

It seemed that Owen had relinquished his former business, having been induced to part with his noble horses by the liberal offer of a gentleman who coveted the superb stud for his family carriage, and that he was now about to seek his fortune at what was then termed the far West. As the point to which he was bound was within one day's journey of Mr.

Vaughan's estate, and as he intended to accomplish the distance in the shortest possible time by travelling day and night, his purpose and route were found to correspond wholly with Mabel's; and it was agreed that, on the following day but one, she and the children should proceed to Albany, and thence on their westward trip, under the guardianship of their honest though unpretending escort.

"Well, now that it's all settled, and it seems probable you'll get there safe," said Mrs. Hope, in a confidential tone to Mabel when she was alone with her that night. "I must say, I think it's the very best thing you could do, and I'm glad you made up your mind to it. You don't seem to have many relations any where 'round, and we're only humble folks, and I for one could n't bear you should stay here and be slighted."

"How do you mean, Mrs. Hope?" said Mabel; "the people in the house are civil, I believe."

"Well, yes, after a fashion; only, you see, they've got it all 'round about the 'smash-up,' as they call it, among the high-feelin' folks. Not that anybody's any reason to say that of you, Miss Mabel; but your poor sister there — it was a pretty hard rub for her. She heard sort o' rumors down to the sea-shore, and she hurried up, Cecilia said, to find out if it was true, and look after the things she'd left here that she thought were her own by right, and they were n't very ready to let her have the rooms; and the servants, they'd got their mouths full of it, and kind of flung it at her — and it seemed as if every thing came together. Laws me! 't was that more 'n the heat or any thing else that took her down."

Mabel shuddered as she thought of the trial that must have been so bitter to her vain and worldly sister, and wept as she meditated on its fearful consequences. She had no fear of disrespect herself, but she could well imagine the nature of the retaliation which had been visited on Mrs. Leroy, whose supercilious manners, barely tolerated in her days of prosperity, would have been sure to excite ridicule and contempt for her in her fallen fortunes.

Alas for the honor which has wealth alone for its foundation,

and the hope which is dependent on frail mortality! With one blast of misfortune, the former is changed to ignominy and insult, and the latter gives place to desperation, decay, and death.

In spite of Mabel's directions to the contrary, there was yet one more scene of worldly show, in which the remains of the once brilliant Mrs. Leroy were destined to form a part. Simplicity was not in the code of that professed fashionist, who had charge of the funeral arrangements; and they were therefore conducted with all that pomp and parade which he deemed essential to his own dignity, if not that of their more immediate object. Due notice had been given of the time and place of the solemnities; but, except by Mabel, the children, Mrs. Hope and Lydia, whose feelings were sincerely affected, and a few of the residents and servants of the hotel, who came out of curiosity, the services were unattended. The clergyman at whose church Mrs. Leroy had now and then occupied a richly furnished pew, was absent from the city, and the ceremony was performed by a stranger. Still, except that Mabel wore no mourning, which she had neither the time nor the means to procure, there was no omission of any of the customary symbols of grief, and every thing was conducted on a scale of profuse magnificence. The carriages, nearly all of which were empty, filed off one by one,—a melancholy pageant —a seeming mockery of her whose whole life had been a pageant — and, in an expensive tomb, in the heart of the noisy city, the strange officials, each wearing a solemn badge, laid the form of her who was destined to be speedily unmissed and forgotten in the very scene of her boasted triumphs.

It was the dim hour of twilight, and Mabel, who had a few hours before returned from paying the last tribute of respect and affection to her sister, was seated, with Murray on her knee, and one arm round the waist of the other orphan boy. A note had just been handed to her, written on rose-colored paper, and expressing in high-flown terms the regret of Mrs. Vannecker that she could not come to her aid. "Cecilia returned to the Cape yesterday," wrote she, "to engage as waiting

maid to a Southern lady, and brought me news of dear Louise's distressing illness. It is truly shocking. My heart yearns to be with her and to comfort you, if you have arrived, as was expected; but the regatta is to take place to-morrow, and Vic has so set her heart upon it, that we cannot leave until it is over. I shall then hope to see you, my darling, and to find that our dear Louise's illness is taking a favorable turn. Of course you employ Gregory; there is nobody like him."

Mabel was placing the note in her pocket, with a long sigh, when there was an abrupt knock at the door. An unfamiliar name was spoken by the servant, and a visitor was unceremoniously ushered into the room. She started up, violently agitated, as if the venerable form before her had been that of a spectre; for, as she recognized the aged man, known to us as Father Noah, there flashed across her the remembrance that Louise had once prophesied this visit, and that, in the same breath, she had lightly and confidently sung the equally prophetic words, "But, oh, I shall not be there."

Where was she? We may not question the mercy of an infinite Providence; but the thrill which shot through Mabel's heart at the moment, proved the strength of her conviction, that her poor sister had not, while on earth, earned a title to a heavenly birthright.

The good clergyman saw her agitation; but in no degree attributing it to his own presence, took her hand gently and sat down beside her. "If Mrs. Hope tells me truly, my dear young lady," said he, "you are realizing the truth, which has passed into a proverb, that misfortunes seldom come singly."

"I am," said Mabel, solemnly.

"Can I help you?" he asked, in a simple, fatherly tone.

"Your kindness helps me," sobbed Mabel, "and I would gladly have a place in your prayers."

"Shall I pray with you?" he added.

Mabel sunk upon her knees, and the children instinctively followed her example, while the old man asked a blessing on them.

It was no common prayer that followed. It betrayed a per-

fect knowledge of the sorrows and the wants of the little group; and as it commended them to the mercy of Heaven, and besought for her, who was to be the guide of youth, the strength which cometh from God only, Mabel felt herself sanctified for the work that was given her to do, and ready to go out into the wilderness, with a brave heart, at the commandment of the Lord.

She rose up, therefore, composed and strengthened; and, as the venerable man sat down, drew the children to his knee, and expressed the simple interest which he had long cherished in Mabel's welfare, she felt her heart opened towards him, and talked freely of her coming experience and its possible duties and trials. He gave her much wise counsel, expressed for her much tender sympathy, and did not forget to impress upon the children, and especially upon Alick, who was listening to him with respectful attention, the obligation which rested upon them to behave, as he said, like little men, and be to her a comfort rather than a care.

Thus, in the hour of her spirit's need, when those who had walked with her in high places shrank from the gentle ministries which affliction craves, this faithful servant of the poor had learned the story of Mabel's grief from the lips of her humble friends, and had come to soothe her with his sympathy and fortify her with his prayers; while, actuated by a like spirit of Christian love, the family whom Louise had injured, and the venerable man whom she had despised, had vied with each other in offices of love to herself and her orphan children.

"Your visit has done me good, sir," said Mabel, taking both his hands, as he rose to go; "I thank you for it with all my heart. It has made me strong."

"May the Lord strengthen and bless you," said he, fervently, in reply, "and may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, dwell in your heart forevermore."

CHAPTER XXIX.

In the dark winter of affliction's hour,
When summer, friends, and pleasures haste away,
And the wrecked heart perceives how frail each power
It made a refuge, and believed a stay;
When man, all wild and weak is seen to be —
There 's none like Thee, O Lord! there 's none like Thee!

MRS. JEWSBURY.

THE morning of departure came. The landlord of the hotel had been summoned, and on Mabel's expressing her regret that her funds were only sufficient for her present wants, had cordially assured her of his perfect readiness to wait Mr. Vaughan's convenience for the settlement of his accounts, and had himself accompanied her to the steamboat. Mrs. Hope was there with shawls over her arm, and parcels in her hand; Jack was there with a huge basket of cakes and candy, provided by his thoughtful mother; Lydia was there, her eyes red with crying, and her hands busy in giving the finishing touch to Murray's curls; and Owen Dowst was at the further end of the wharf attending to the baggage.

At length they took their places, Mabel and the boys in the centre of the deck, where they were protected by an ample awning, and Owen modestly choosing a seat at the stern of the boat, where, without intrusion, he could keep the little party in sight. The bell rang and they moved off;— Jack waved his cap, Mrs. Hope cried out "Good-bye," and Lydia timidly threw a kiss, — not at Mabel, however, or the boys, but in response to one from the stern of the vessel, where Owen stood, leaning over the railing, and looking back with a tear in his honest eye.

The first day's journey passed without any important incident. The weather, which had promised to be fair, soon

became dull, and at length a pouring rain drove the passengers to the cabin, where, for many successive hours, they were crowded together, deprived of fresh air, and with no prospect of being able to venture again on deck.

Here all Mabel's powers were called into action, for the diversion and entertainment of Murray, whose restlessness could ill brook the restraint to which he was subjected in the ladies' saloon, and who continually threatened to stray beyond its limits. Fortunately, however, Owen, who had stationed himself in the vicinity of the door, contrived to decoy him to a place on his knee, and amused and entertained him there until the bell sounded for dinner. While watching the good-natured youth, as he cut an apple into a fanciful shape, or whittled a figure from a bit of wood, the child was completely happy, and Mabel was freed from all anxiety concerning him.

These ingenious and friendly devices, however, though not lost upon Alick, had no power to win him from his position beside Mabel, where, with the basket of provisions at his feet, and his arm passed through the handle of the carpet bag, he sat upright and firm as a sentinel at his post. Whether Father Noah's exhortation, to "behave like a little man," still influenced him, or whether he felt a proud and instinctive consciousness of being in some degree his aunt's protector, he manifested no sign of weariness, and never once during the day uttered a single complaint.

They dined and supped on board the boat, the thoughtful Owen having secured seats, and recommended them to the care of one of the waiters, whom he chanced to know, and with whom he afterwards took his own repasts at the second table.

But although the gentle motion of the boat, the comparative privacy of the ladies' cabin, and the respectful devotion of her attendant, contrived to render this first day's experience satisfactory to Mabel and soothing to her anxieties, the interval between the arrival of the party in Albany, and their departure in the night-train for Buffalo, was replete with those incidents which constitute the trials of the traveller, and ren-

der journeying an uncertain and hazardous experiment. The boat was late at her wharf; there was some delay and difficulty in the distribution of baggage; noise and confusion prevailed in every direction, and before Owen could collect his own boxes and Mabel's trunks, the carriages, loaded with passengers for the cars, had all driven off. Among the coaches that remained, all had one or more occupants bound in a different direction, and none of the drivers would agree to reach the station in season for the Western train. Mabel's countenance betrayed her agitation and alarm, Alick looked piteously from one rough face to another, and Murray, dimly comprehending that something was the matter, as usual began to cry.

"Look here — I say," cried Owen, catching a burly, round-faced fellow by the button, and glancing significantly towards Mabel, "don't disappoint that lady now, — it 's too bad, — her folks were hurt, — one on 'em killed by that bad accident last week, — she 's a goin' out there to her father, — don't you be the means of her losin' the train."

What a revulsion of feeling such an appeal will oftentimes produce. "Do tell," said the man. "Now that 's a case. Hullo, Sam, — haul those trunks up here, will yer? Give a hand, boy, — her father" (in his turn, nodding at Mabel,) "was killed on the cars last week. Look here, you," speaking to a gaily dressed fop inside, who, seeing his valise unceremoniously thrown on to the sidewalk, was already preparing to alight; "this gentleman," (waving his hand towards Sam) "will take you up to the hotel; I'm bound to get these tother folks down to the Buffalo cars; in with you, Bub," and he lifted Alick, basket, carpet-bag and all, into the carriage; Mabel and Murray followed; Owen sprung up outside, and they were off.

There are few things more trying to the patience, and more exciting to the nerves, than driving through the crowded streets of a city, with the apprehension that every moment's delay may be fatal to one's hopes. During the ten minutes that they were hurrying and rattling over the pavements,

Mabel endeavored in vain to quiet her disturbed feelings, and strove, with equal want of success, to soothe the weeping Murray, while Alick silently watched his aunt's countenance, as if it were the dial-plate of destiny. They were barely in season after all; there was just time for the luggage to be thrown hastily on board, and the last bell was sounding as Owen entered a car, with Murray in his arms, followed by Mabel and Alick, almost breathless with the haste they had made, and carrying between them the basket and travelling bag, which Alick could not transport alone, but which the sturdy boy was unwilling to relinquish.

This little incident served at once to excite Mabel's anxieties for the future, and to impress her with a sense of her dependence on Owen. She felt sick at heart, as imagination conjured up the possible disasters and delays which might ensue before the termination of the journey, and, as the darkness of the night came on, and a thick gloom settled over every object, an undefined dread took possession of her; and when Murray exclaimed with convulsive sobbing, "Auntie, Murray is tired, — Murray can't ride all night," she was tempted to fold the child to her bosom, and weep with him over their multiplied misfortunes.

Her weakness was rebuked, however, by the confiding tone in which Alick responded to his brother's complaint, — "I ain't tired, Murray," said he, — "I would n't mind going anywhere with Aunt Mabel."

"I would," said Murray. "I want to go home."

"Let me take him a little while, Miss Vaughan," said Owen, who had observed his fretfulness; "I see he 's getting pretty uneasy. Will you come and sit by me, Murray?"

The child hesitated, too thoroughly weary to have any preference.

"I 'll coax the little fellow off to sleep," said Owen, lifting him in his strong arms, and bearing him to his own seat at the further end of the car, where, wrapped in a heavy pilot-cloth coat, and with his head resting on Owen's shoulder, he soon fell into a quiet slumber. Two or three hours passed away.

Alick, despite his efforts to the contrary, had fallen asleep, though still sitting as upright as a grenadier, and Mabel had once or twice forgotten her anxieties, and enjoyed a few moments' repose, when a bright light shone in their faces, and suddenly awaking, they discovered that the train was stopping at a place of some importance, if one might judge by the bustle which pervaded the platform in front of the station. Murray, also, awakened by the noise and lights, ran to his aunt, rubbing his eyes, and petitioning for something to eat.

"Milk, too, Auntie — I must have some milk," he cried, as she proceeded to open the luncheon-basket.

"No, Murray, I have no milk for you," was the reply; "a cake will do without milk, won't it?"

"I can get him a glass of milk, or some water, at least, Miss Vaughan," said Owen, who was about to leave the car, and paused to offer his services. "The train stops here five minutes — plenty of time, Miss. I'll hand it in at the window."

"Take my purse, Owen," said Mabel, "and pay for it, if you please."

The milk was brought to the window in a pitcher. Owen had a tumbler in his hand, and all were by turns refreshed with the sweet and wholesome beverage. There was still a moment or two of delay at the station — ample time for the young man to return, pay for the milk, and take his place in the cars. Still, the bell rang, and the train proceeded on its way without his having made his appearance. Mabel looked back with some anxiety, but supposing that he had entered a rear car and would soon make his way to them, she did not feel any positive alarm and was therefore wholly taken by surprise when a few moments after, the conductor, as he passed with his lantern in hand, held it up to her face and said inquiringly, "Was n't that young fellow in the pilot-cloth coat with you, ma'am?"

"Yes," answered Mabel. "Why?"

"He got left behind at the last station," said the man coolly.

"Got left!" exclaimed Mabel, repeating his words in aston-

ishment and fright, while Alick groaned aloud and Murray set up a shrill and prolonged cry.

"Yes, they took some of his boxes out there by mistake, so the baggage-master says, and he caught sight of 'em and sprung off the platform just as we were starting."

"Could n't you stop for him?" asked Mabel, in a tone of mingled appeal and reproach.

"Could n't, no how," said the man, though speaking in a tone of regret. "We 're behind our time now. If there 's any mistake it ain't our fault; he could n't have had his things marked right in Albany. He 'll come on to-morrow, I reckon."

"To-morrow," thought Mabel, "but where shall we be by that time?" And at the same instant the remembrance flashed upon her that he was in possession of her purse, containing all the money she had in the world.

"What *shall* I do?" was the involuntary exclamation which burst from her lips as, trembling with agitation, she started up impulsively, then in a despairing manner sank back into her seat.

"Can 't we go on without him, Auntie?" asked Alick anxiously, while Murray continued to cry, loudly threatening, amid his sobs, to "beat that old conductor, and make him go back for Owen."

"Oh, I do n't know, Alick, what we shall do," said Mabel, the self-command which she had hitherto maintained in the presence of the children forsaking her at this unforeseen crisis.

The interest and compassion of the other passengers were evidently awakened. Many outstretched forms were suddenly raised from a recumbent position, and many sleepy eyes turned in the direction of our little group of travellers, while a murmur of inquiry and response ran through the car. The conductor, however, had passed hastily out with his lantern, and as the feeble and expiring light from an ill-trimmed lamp above afforded little satisfaction to curiosity, most of the weary company soon subsided into their former dreamy state of uncon sciousness.

"God will take care of us, Auntie," said Alick, in a comforting tone; "that old minister said so, and I believe him."

"So do I," answered Mabel, drawing both the children as closely to her as possible, and feeling, for the second time, rebuked by Alick's child-like faith — first in her, and now in a higher power.

At the same instant, a voice proceeding from the seat directly behind them, addressed Mabel in a tone of gentle but earnest inquiry. "I have been asleep, my dear; but, if I understand right, your servant has got left at Utica."

"Not my servant, except by free-will, ma'am," answered Mabel, her face as she turned being brought close to that of the person who was leaning forward to speak to her, but whose features were undistinguishable in the dim light.

"Oh, I was mistaken, then," said the lady, apologetically. "I only judged from appearances, when you came into the car at dusk."

"Yes, ma'am, it is not strange," said Mabel; "I don't wonder at it, he was so kind to the boys and so civil to me. He was a good friend, and we depended upon him, and now, — now — "

Her voice choked; she could not go on.

The old lady — for the stranger was advanced in years — quietly rose, came forward, and taking the seat beside Mabel from which Alick had risen in the moment of excitement, said kindly, "And do you need a friend now, my dear?"

Mabel could not answer except by putting her hand into that of the old lady, who pressed it tenderly.

"Little brothers?" said she, drawing Alick toward her, and gently soothing Murray with the words, "Poor boy! there, don't cry!"

"She 's our auntie," said Alick, proudly.

"And where 's mamma?"

"She 's gone to another world," answered Murray, promptly.

"She died last Saturday," whispered Alick.

Their new friend uttered an exclamation of pity, and, grieved

at the result of her natural inquiry, forbore all further questioning.

"Poor little fellows! you must both be tired," said she. "Come, I will put you to bed." And rising, she beckoned to a woman just behind them, and with her assistance proceeded to carry her purpose into execution. "Don't stir; we will make them very comfortable," she added, as Mabel proposed to assist her. And taking advantage of some vacant seats opposite, she spread upon them her own and the woman's surplus supply of shawls, and in a few moments the exhausted children were disposed of for the rest of the night.

"My child, you have seen trouble, I fear," said the benevolent lady, as, resuming her seat by Mabel, she passed one arm round the young girl's waist, and drew her head upon her shoulder.

Mabel had in some degree steeled herself against the hardships and trials which she might encounter, but this unexpected kindness wholly overpowered her; the floodgates of her soul were opened, and her tears poured forth like rain. Her judicious comforter did not attempt to restrain her. She well knew the relief it sometimes is to weep, and without interrupting her by a word, suffered her feelings to have vent.

"Lie still, dear," said she, as Mabel, having at length become more composed, made a movement to sit upright.

"You are very good; but I shall fatigue and distress you."

"Do not disturb yourself on my account," was the reply. "I only require a few hours sleep, and I have had that already. I want to see you take some rest."

"Oh, I cannot sleep," said Mabel, "I am too unhappy."

"Perhaps I can help you," said the old lady. "There are two sides to trouble, — let us try and look at the bright side."

"I never gave up so before," said Mabel, "and I know I ought not to now, but this seemed too much."

"Was this young man so essential to you, then, that you cannot get on without him?"

"He was very considerate and kind," said Mabel. "I shall

miss him, and so will the boys; but that is not the worst,—he has got all my money. I gave him my purse to pay for some milk for the children just before he left the cars."

"Well, that is bad," said the old lady, "but not beyond remedy. How far are you expecting to travel?"

Mabel named the town and county in the eastern part of Illinois, which were her destination.

"And you were to take the steamer at Buffalo?"

"Yes, to-morrow night."

"There is no boat until the night following," said the old lady, confidently. "I have made particular inquiries, as I am to pursue the same route myself. So you see Owen will have time to join you, and, meanwhile, you shall be under my care; and afterwards, too," added she, "if you can feel confidence in an old lady who is a stranger to you, but who has seen much of the world, and is an experienced traveller."

Mabel thanked her heartily in her own name and the children's.

"Do not thank me," said her kind friend, "the benefit will be mutual. I am fond of young people, and glad to be of use in the world. If my three score years and ten can afford you comfort and protection, then I have not grown old in vain."

"Oh, I cannot tell you the relief it will be, if you will only let me keep within sight of you," exclaimed Mabel, eagerly. Then, as she recalled the lady's previous allusion to her being a stranger, she added, with simple candor, at the same time lifting her head, and speaking with great earnestness, "But you are very good, ma'am, to feel confidence in *me*. It must seem strange to you that I should be travelling so far, with the charge of these children, and dependent myself upon a young man who is not of my own station in life."

"Yes, a little singular, perhaps," answered the lady, "but no more so than many things which admit of easy explanation; or, even if I were still left to wonder at the circumstance, it would not deter me from offering my aid to one who seems to need it."

"May I tell you how it happened?" asked Mabel.

"Certainly, my child, if you please to do so. Tell me anything that you feel willing to confide to one old enough to be a safe, but not too old to be a sympathizing friend."

Thus encouraged, Mabel suffered her head to drop once more upon the shoulder of the tall and strongly-framed, though venerable lady, and in the darkness of the night, and amid the hush which prevailed among the sleepers who were stretched around, she poured into her willing ear, in a low and broken voice, the story of her recent family bereavements, and the sufferings, responsibilities, and perplexities, which had ensued. Her bitterest griefs and anxieties were such, indeed, as can be breathed only in the ear of Heaven, but the partial revelation which she made was enough and more than enough to excite all the tender compassion of her aged friend, as was evident from the gentle expressions of condolence which escaped her, and the affectionate solicitude with which she drew a cloak round the weary girl, and now and then pressed her closer to her side. So sweet, indeed, was this welcome assurance of protection and sympathy, that, at length, the tale being ended, and the aching heart, in some measure, relieved of its burden, tired nature asserted its claims, and a soft and refreshing sleep stole over Mabel's senses.

It was daylight when she awoke. The sun was streaming through the car; most of the passengers were sitting bolt upright in their seats, their firm attitudes seeming to defy any one who should accuse them of having slept a wink on the journey; and the whole scene was so different from that which had prevailed a few hours before, that Mabel could not for a moment realize where she was, or whether the events of the previous night had not all been a dream. There could be nothing imaginary, however, in the friendly shoulder on which her head was comfortably pillowed, nor could anything be more kind and cordial than the smile which reassured her, as starting up, she suddenly exclaimed, "Why, how long I have lain here! How I must have tired you!"

"No, you have not tired me in the least. I am rejoiced

that you have slept so long. How do you feel this morning, my dear?"

But Mabel did not seem to heed the kind inquiry. Her eyes were fixed earnestly on the face of her new friend, while a glow of pleasure radiated her features. There could be no mistaking that benevolent countenance, that dignified form, those silver curls peeping from the snowy fluting of the widow's cap, above all, that cheering and animating smile; and, snatching the hand of the good lady, Mabel pressed it to her lips, exclaiming, "You are not a stranger after all! I have seen you before. You are Mrs. Abraham Percival!"

"Do you know me, then?" was the reply. "That is pleasant. I have been studying your face, my dear, and thought it seemed familiar, but you must help my memory a little. I cannot recall the name."

"Mabel Vaughan; but perhaps you have never heard the whole name."

Madam Percival shook her head. "No," said she, after a moment's thought, "never; but I once knew a Miss Vaughan, possibly a relative of yours. She must be somewhat advanced if she is still living, which I presume to be the case, as I exchanged cards with her in New York last winter, though we had not the pleasure of meeting. We used to call her Sabiah, in her younger days."

"My aunt," faltered Mabel, a new light dawning upon her in reference to the memorable visit, which had, as it proved, been so wholly misinterpreted.

"Ah! then you are a daughter of her brother John. You see," added she, with her winning smile, "we old-fashioned folks are always acquainted with the family tree; however, I lived in your father's native town some years; I was an assistant teacher in the village academy, and your aunt was one of my pupils."

"Was she, indeed?" said Mabel, with interest. "Dear aunt Sabiah, how she would like to see you!"

"I was in hopes to revive our acquaintance last winter," said Madam Percival. "I have always continued to feel an

interest in your aunt, and as I happened to learn her address in New York, through one of her village friends, I took an early opportunity to call; but I think it probable she has nearly or wholly forgotten me, or perhaps would only recognize me by my maiden name."

"She never knew of your visit," said Mabel, with a blush of mortification, "she never had a chance to know. I had the vanity to take it to myself, and I was the Miss Vaughan who left a card at your door. Oh, how sorry I am!"

A shade of disappointment passed over Madam Percival's countenance also, for a moment, then she exclaimed quickly, as if anxious to relieve Mabel's evident regret, "It was very natural, however. Your aunt probably lived a retired life."

"Yes, very," said Mabel, "but she would have been so glad to see you."

"Ah, well!" said Madam Percival, "do not lament it too seriously, my child. Time has made great changes with us both, and the meeting might not have been wholly pleasurable. But tell me, my dear, where it is that I have seen your face before."

Mabel named the occasion.

"Yes, indeed, I remember now," said Madam Percival, with evident pleasure in the recollection. "You were my grandson's partner in the country-dance. Ah! that was a pleasant evening. We all enjoyed it much."

This reference to her own enjoyment, and that of her friends, led Mabel to speak in grateful terms of one of their number, the good clergyman, to whom she was so much indebted. Madam Percival was deeply interested by the young girl's narrative of his deeds of Christian charity, and by the time it was concluded, the boys awoke, eager to make an attack upon the luncheon. Madam Percival left room for the children beside their aunt, by herself returning to the seat next the female attendant, who was the companion of her journey, and for some hours the ordinary events of travelling succeeded.

"We shall soon be in Buffalo, my dear," said Madam Perci-

val at length, leaning forward and laying her hand on Mabel's shoulder, to attract her attention.

Mabel, thus suddenly roused from a sad and painful reverie, into which she had fallen, a train of thought superinduced no doubt by the disclosures and coincidences of the morning, started, turned, and said, in an abstracted manner, "Yes, and what shall we do then?"

"Whatever you like, my poor, tried child; you need rest and refreshment for body and mind. I was thinking where we could best find it?"

"Wherever you please," said Mabel. "I shall be only too contented and thankful to stay with you."

"Have you ever been to Niagara?"

"Never, ma'am," answered Mabel, with a slight tremulousness in her voice, at the mention of a spot she had once so yearned to visit, but which was now associated with many a bitter memory.

"We shall have twenty-four hours to spare before the steam boat leaves," said Madam Percival. "I have consulted my little friend here (and she tapped with her spectacles the railroad guide which she held in her hand), and find that we can, if we choose, proceed directly to Niagara, and remain there until within a few hours of the boat's sailing. It will be an uncomfortable night in the city. I am well known at the Cataract House, and we shall be sure of every outward comfort, to say nothing of the inexpressible pleasure of having a glimpse at the Falls. Do you like the plan?"

"I don't know," said Mabel, hesitating. "I would rather you should decide."

"You can scarcely be expected to have any preference under the circumstances, my dear," said Madam Percival, laying her hand anxiously on Mabel's flushed cheek, "but I am convinced there could be no better prescription for you than the one I recommend. The boys require rest and fresh cool air to invigorate them after the journey, but you need something more; it is the tired heart and brain which sends this feverish blood to your cheek, rather than any physical fatigue, though you have had

your share of that. You are my guests for the present, — my adopted children I would say, — and so I feel myself at liberty to study your wants, and endeavor to supply them. Besides," added she, with a persuasive smile and tone, which made it almost appear that she was begging, instead of conferring a favor, "we old folks, who pride ourselves on our experience, love to try our favorite remedies; so, if you leave the decision to me, we will keep on to Niagara, and risk the additional fatigue in consideration of the benefits we hope to derive from the effort."

Comprehending at once the disinterestedness of this scheme to divert her troubled mind from the contemplation of its sorrows, Mabel hastened to deprecate the idea of her aged friend's incurring any unnecessary fatigue on her account; but Madam Percival assured her that she never suffered from the effects of travelling, and that in the present case, the necessity for one day's delay rendered the temptation to visit the Falls irresistible, apart from the satisfaction it would be to introduce her young friends to one of the grandest wonders of nature, in which, as Americans, they had all a common birthright.

So the excursion was determined on; and night found them established in a comfortable hotel, where, within hearing of the roar of the mighty cataract, they all experienced the welcome refreshment and repose which weary travellers crave.

CHAPTER XXX.

My soul were dark
But for the golden light and rainbow hue
That, sweeping heaven with their triumphal arc,
Break on the view.

Enough to feel
That God indeed is good ! enough to know
Without the gloomy clouds he could reveal
No beauteous bow.

WILLIAM CROSWELL.

AT an early hour, the next morning, a pleasant voice was heard outside Mabel's door, saying, softly, "Are you awake, my dear?" and was answered by Mabel's presenting herself, already dressed and equipped for going out.

"You are on the alert, I see," said Madam Percival, who also wore her bonnet and shawl, as if prepared for a walk. "I thought I heard your step in the room, or I would not have disturbed you. How have you slept?"

"Very soundly until daylight; but then I awoke, and, hearing the noise of the Falls, could not resist going out to see them before breakfast."

"Ah, you are a girl after my own heart," said Madam Percival, drawing Mabel's arm through hers. "I have left word with my woman, Mrs. Patten, to go in and attend to the children's wants, whenever they awake, so you need feel no anxiety about them;" and the old and the young lady left the hotel together.

"This is the direction leading to the bridge over the rapids," said Madam Percival, when they had gained a side street. "I see an old acquaintance of mine — that Indian woman, just opening her little store of wares over opposite — she knows

me;" and Madam Percival bowed in kindly recognition to the dusky squaw, whose face was full of eagerness. "I must go and speak to her. Do not wait for me; I will overtake you." Thus speaking, Madam Percival crossed the road leading to the bridge, and Mabel proceeded alone.

How tumultuous and how mingled was the rushing tide of thought which assailed her during that short, lonely walk! The time, the place, the solitude — how suggestive were they all! How many of her childhood's hopes, her girlish anticipations had centred around Niagara! How fondly had she looked forward to this fulfilment of her early dreams! How little had she foreseen the cruel chain of circumstances which had brought her to the spot at last, disappointed, forsaken, and bereaved. A moment more, and, in the stillness of the morning, for the sun had not yet risen, she found herself alone on the bridge, beneath which flowed the angry torrent. Panting from exercise, breathless with her own agitating reflections, and dumb with astonishment and awe, she stood, with parted lips, gazing up that gigantic slope, down which, in wild and frantic speed, the waters were hastening to their fearful plunge. Whence came they and whither did they go — those mad, triumphant waves — which, scorning all opposition and beating down all obstacles, seemed like the very messengers of doom! An instinctive dread took possession of Mabel's mind, as, gazing long and fixedly at these witnesses to God's power and majesty, she saw in them types of those recent events which, bearing down like a mighty flood and overwhelming her beneath a torrent of trouble, had left her to struggle helplessly with the current. "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me, great God," she exclaimed aloud, at length withdrawing her gaze from a scene whose sublime and solemn grandeur was, to the excited girl, almost lost in a nervous sense of terror.

Then, as the roar still continued sounding in her ears, an irresistible impulse seized her to hasten on and witness the end, which, at present, she could image to herself only as a dire catastrophe; and, as if fearful that, by a moment's delay, she should lose something of the awful spectacle which she half

longed, half dreaded to behold, she commenced running, and, without pausing to take breath, continued at the same rapid pace until she suddenly gained an elevated point, where, at a glance, she could discern the two rival divisions of the far-famed cataract. She gazed for an instant only, at the dark and angry waters, on which the sun, now just below the verge of the horizon, had not yet shed his beams, and which, as they plunged down the fearful vortex, seemed to her bewildered senses to utter only a message of stern and angry wrath; then throwing herself on the ground, with her face hid against a huge overhanging rock, she burst into a fit of passionate and uncontrollable weeping. Her excited feelings having thus found vent, however, and her strained nerves being relieved by this free and natural outburst, she soon became more calm, and at length lay quite still, listening, without terror, to the roar of the waters, when, suddenly, she heard, close beside her, in measured and familiar accents, the solemn words,—"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

There was a pause; then a long-drawn sigh escaped Mabel, and attracted the attention of Madam Percival, who had not until then perceived her.

"What! are you here before me, and in my favorite spot, my child?" exclaimed she; then seeing the despairing attitude and covered face of Mabel, and at once conjecturing that, in the weak state of her nervous system, she had been overcome by the scene, she sat down beside her and said, in a self-reproving tone, "Ah! I should not have let you come here alone."

"It frightens me," said Mabel, with a shudder. "I should not have minded the fall so much,—but those dreadful rapids!" and again a slight shudder passed over her frame. "It seemed as if everything were pouring down at once just as—just as"—

"Just as trouble comes upon us poor mortals, you would say, my dear."

"Yes, I could not help thinking of myself."

"I have often had the same thought," said Madam Percival,

soothingly; "but I have also found here a lesson of faith and hope, which has fortified me in the hour of trouble, and which I trusted you would have learned here, too. Often are we borne through the rushing waves of anxiety, suspense, and pain, and plunged at last down the gulf of a mighty sorrow; but let us not be faithless or despairing. He who has meted out the bounds of the earth has said to human suffering, as to the mighty torrent, 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther;' and even amid the shock of a great calamity, we know that the raging torrent of affliction is spanned by the rainbow of His love. Look up, my dear, look up."

Mabel lifted her head quickly, as her attention was thus earnestly claimed, and above the watery abyss, which a few moments before had been so dark and fearful, a glorious rainbow danced and quivered in the beams of the newly-risen sun; and, as the glittering spray caught and reflected the rays of light in new forms of radiance, another and another brilliant arch stretched its graceful curve across the foaming flood.

A smile of joy flashed out from Mabel's face, effecting in it a transformation scarcely less striking than that which had so suddenly been wrought in the face of nature; she clasped her hands, and stood for some moments in a rapt and serene silence.

Madam Percival watched the play of her features with affectionate interest; and, as the anxious and troubled expression of her countenance was gradually superseded by the glow of a Heavenly peace, she said in a low and fervent tone, "Ah! my child, it is only when the light of the Sun of Righteousness comes to illumine our darkened hearts, that we can comprehend the love of Him who is continually confirming his ancient promise — "It shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud."

"I have realized it many times," said Mabel, eagerly; "I realize it now."

"It is shining in your face, my love," said Madam Percival. "Come, let us go back to the hotel, and cheer with it the little

orphan hearts which must look to you henceforward to be the sunshine of their lives.

"Is it not grand? is it not encouraging and ennobling?" said Madam Percival, when, some hours later, they sat together on the flat surface of Table Rock, watching the gigantic waters of the Horse Shoe Fall. "In the course of a long life, I have visited this spot many times, and I have invariably gone away refreshed and strengthened, as if I had been listening to the voice of a sacred oracle. Especially when the chastening of God's providence was heavy upon me, have I been cheered by this glorious proclamation of the truth, that His power goes hand in hand with His love."

"I cannot thank you enough for bringing me here," said Mabel;—"it is a remembrance for a life-time."

"I confess," said the old lady, "my first thought was merely to divert your mind from dwelling too fixedly on your recent trials. I did not realize how fully you were open to impressions from nature. Now I cannot be too thankful for the prompting which bade me lead you to this school of high thoughts and noble purposes. God grant, my child, that your young life, sanctified by the divine blessing, may flow on in as strong, deep, and tranquil a current, as that of this noble river, whose waters, henceforward, with only now and then a temporary interruption, sweep calmly on to the eternal ocean. You, indeed, need moral courage and strength, my child, for it is a noble mission which you have before you."

"You mean the care of the children," said Mabel, observing that Madam Percival's eye was fixed upon the boys, who were playing at a little distance?"

"Yes,—the training of these young minds and hearts is an office of true dignity and greatness, and one in which you have all my sympathy. I, too, have educated boys, and my work is not yet finished. If I read those little fellows' characters aright, your responsibility is as great as your influence is unbounded. That eldest child loves you with a devotion which I have rarely seen equalled in one of his years. It is through that love that he must learn to cherish those universal sym-

pathies, in which I suspect him to be deficient, and that happy, affectionate, beautiful, spoiled plaything yonder, who is at this moment attracting the attention of strangers, will develope impulses and propensities of so wide a range, that all the ardor of his nature must be early taught to concentrate itself on the pure, the elevated, and the good. Remember, my dear, that your counsels may rule in many generations of hearts, and, if the thought will add sanctity to your office, cherish the belief that the principles you instil, may help to mould the future fortunes of this free republic."

A shade of earnest thought and holy resolution was stamped on Mabel's attentive face, as, with her eyes intently fixed on the children, she listened to the solemn charge of her experienced and venerable friend. It would have been difficult to pronounce which was the nobler countenance of the two; that of the benevolent and Christian matron who thus uttered the words of warning and of wisdom, or that of the enthusiastic and truth-loving girl, into whose heart they sunk with a deep and lasting power. Madam Percival gazed into the earnest face of Mabel, and her heart warmed anew towards her, as she read in every expressive feature a hopeful prophecy for the future, — a prophecy which after years saw gloriously fulfilled.

We pass over the departure from Niagara, after a visit which, though brief, was memorable to at least two of the little company, between whom there had, then and there, been sealed the compact of a friendship, rendered the more sacred by the wide difference in their years. All were refreshed and strengthened for continuing the journey; and the joy of the children, and the relief and satisfaction of Mabel were complete, when, at the steamboat wharf in Buffalo, they met Owen, who, poor fellow, had suffered the most intense anxiety on their account, and who at once became a sharer in their gratitude to Madam Percival, as was evident from his clumsy but honest expression of thanks, and still more from his unwearied and deferential services to her during the remainder of the journey. "Upon my word, Ma'am," said he, "when I found they were off, and nobody to see to 'em, I was e'en

a'most crazed; and when, to crown the whole, I found Miss Vaughan's purse in my pocket, I believe I went clean mad. Why, I 'd a fired one of the engines, and come off on my own hook, but 't was no use; I just had to cool down and learn patience by waitin'. But I see, and bless the Lord for it too, the young lady wa' n't without a protector, nor never will be in this world, I've a notion, — sartin not if she has her deserts; and I make bold to thank you for your goodness on my own account, Ma'am, and for the relief it is to my conscience;" and taking off his hat and bowing, as he had been wont to bow to Rosy, he drew back a step and added, "Owen Dowst's your servant for life, Ma'am." Madam Percival was one who could appreciate the simplicity and worth of Mabel's humble escort; and before their travels together were at an end, he had learned to look upon this lady, as almost every one did who came under her influence, as a reliable friend. She talked intelligently with him of farms, stock and crops; gave him much valuable information regarding Western life, and when he finally ventured to consult her with reference to the investment of his little property, she entered into his schemes with as ready an interest as if she had been a professed land-agent and he a wealthy speculator.

Thus all went on happily and harmoniously, and Mabel, with Madam Percival for her counsellor and friend, Owen as the devoted attendant of herself and the children, and Mrs. Patten, who shared all the interests of her beloved mistress, to minister to her wants, and relieve her of little cares, found her formidable journey drawing to a safe conclusion, and almost sighed as she thought how soon she must part from these valued and tried friends of her adversity.

The last night of their sojourn in each other's company was passed on board a canal-boat. The children had gone to sleep in the cabin; Mrs. Patten was watching beside them; Owen, at the stern of the boat, was giving voluntary aid in the stowing of some freight, and Madam Percival and Mabel were seated on deck, holding the last of those pleasant and valuable conversations which they had enjoyed together.

"I am glad you like this Western country," said Madam Percival, "and that you do not feel discouraged by its yet rough and undeveloped character. It is a great field, and one in which comparatively little has yet been accomplished. You will find much that is strange, uncouth, and utterly at variance with all your preconceived ideas; but to a noble mind there is a satisfaction in overcoming difficulties, and every effort is sure to find its reward in a land which makes such a rich return for the labor bestowed on it."

"It excites all my enthusiasm," said Mabel. "I have felt, a hundred times on our journey, as if I would gladly stop short at any given point, and remain a year or more, to watch the progress which could almost be seen in passing, and of which I hear such wonderful accounts on every side."

"Say rather," said Madam Percival, "to take part in that progress. Do not consider yourself excluded by your age or sex from exerting an active influence on the growth and true civilization of any spot in which you are either temporarily or permanently a resident. In a country whose physical development is so unexampled as this, too much effort cannot be made to insure a proportionate advance in moral and spiritual growth. It may be that your influence and example must be confined to a narrow circle, but do not forget that, however restricted may be your sphere, it is woman's peculiar privilege and province to exert that softening, elevating, purifying spirit, which sanctifies the ruder labors of life, and sheds abroad in the community a nobler ambition than that of building cities in the wilderness, and subduing the elements to human will. Above all, my dear, do not consider your life in the West a period of exile; this is but a part of our mother country, destined, in time perhaps, to become in its influence, what it already is in its locality, — the centre and heart of the republic."

"I am already accustoming myself," said Mabel, "to look upon it as my future home, for such it may eventually become."

"Make it a home, my dear," said Madam Percival, "for

yourself and your family; at least, while you remain in it, give it your affection and your best efforts, — it is the only way to render it a happy residence or a useful one. I have homes in several parts of our country, and it would be hard for me to say which I love best. It is now fifteen years since I accompanied my husband into this then unsettled region. He was one of the pioneers of civilization, and the affection which I then conceived for this Western valley has continued in full force ever since. It has been with great satisfaction that I have made successive pilgrimages hither, and now that I have come to finish my days, perhaps, in this land of promise, I do not feel willing to consider it the home of my adoption, but simply my native soil."

"If you were only to be near me," said Mabel, "it would be such a comfort; your counsel would be so precious."

"Forty miles is not counted a very great distance in this part of the world, my dear; and that, as nearly as I can judge, is the distance between your father's estate and that of my son. My hand, owing to one of the infirmities of age, has recently been disabled from writing, but I shall find a way, one of these days, to communicate with my young friends, and shall always be rejoiced to hear from you in return. But, good night; I will not keep you up any longer to listen to an old woman's preaching."

Before morning they had reached the bustling Western city where their united route terminated. Mabel and the children took passage in the clumsy carriage in which they were to commence their last day's journey; Owen set out for another part of the country; and Madam Percival, having seen her adopted charges on their way, proceeded to the house of a friend, where she was to await her son's arrival in the city.

It was a cold, rainy, and uncomfortable evening, when, with the horses weary and steaming, and the children exhausted with cold and fatigue, Mabel, almost hopeless of ever reaching their destination, which had seemed all day to recede as they advanced, at length heard from their driver the joyful words,

"That 'ere's Mr. Vaughan's house where you see the light over yonder."

"Don't cry; we are almost there, Murray!" she exclaimed, encouragingly, to the poor weeping child, who, sadly feeling the want of Madam Percival's shawls and Owen's pilot cloth coat, was shivering with the cold, from which all Mabel's care could ill protect him, and who, hungry, dissatisfied, and out of humor, had complained and cried bitterly for the last half hour. "Look over there, beyond the river—that is grandpa's house; you will soon see him and Uncle Harry."

"I don't want to see them! I hate this place! I won't stay here!" sobbed Murray.

"It will be better than riding all night, though, Murray; won't it?" said Alick, in the same patient, philosophical tone which the little man had maintained from the commencement of the journey.

"Ye'll have to get out here and step up a piece," said the driver, halting within a few rods of the house. "My road turns off here to the post-office, and these horses is dead beat, that's a fact."

Mabel needed no second bidding; she was only too glad to trust to her own feet, to which eagerness lent wings, and in an instant more, with Murray in her arms and Alick close beside her, she hastened in the direction of the light, opened the unlocked door of the house, and entered. She found herself in a dark passage, and was groping for the inner door, when it was suddenly thrown open; and, with a cry of joy, she set Murray on the floor, and flung her arms around the neck of her astonished brother.

Had it been the ghost of Mabel instead of Mabel herself, it could have created no greater surprise and consternation. Mr. Vaughan, who was sitting in an arm-chair by the fire, turned his head as Harry uttered her name, and seeing his daughter before him, became pale, tried twice to rise from his seat, then sank back as if seized by sudden giddiness, while a look of deep distress passed over his haggard features.

"Mabel here!" was his exclamation.

She had thrown herself on the floor beside him, and with both arms resting on his knee, was looking him earnestly in the face before he had finished speaking the words. "Yes, father; Mabel and the boys."

"Alick! Murray! What does it all mean?" cried the old man, greatly agitated — "their mother?"

There was a pause — a long, long pause — no one spoke. Alick hung down his head. Murray crept to the fire and kept on sobbing.

"Their mother, Mabel?" said Mr. Vaughan, again, in a tone of anxious inquiry.

"They have no mother in this world but me, father," answered Mabel, in a hollow whisper.

The head of the afflicted parent dropped upon his bosom. Harry came up, untied Mabel's bonnet, smoothed her hair with his hands, kissed her hastily, and walked to the other end of the room to hide his agitation. She rose and stood looking into the fire.

"Is she dead? How did it happen? When did she die? Where?" asked Mr. Vaughan, at last, in a choked voice.

Mabel gave a simple outline of the facts. Mr. Vaughan held fast to the sides of his chair, as if needing support, and presently Harry came back, and watching Mabel's countenance, listened also to the story. Now and then, one or the other asked some anxious question, and at length amid sighs, sobs, and secret shudderings, the sad tale was fully told. There was a second long silence, broken only by Murray's cries, and then succeeded other questionings and other cares; the weary young travellers — their long, hard journey; the trying experiences of Mabel; the exposures and deprivations of the poor children; their present necessities and wants — all in turn demanded consideration, and were in turn discussed. Murray's loud complaints of cold and hunger were promptly responded to by Harry, who piled on more wood and went to consult the larder, and, through his good housekeeping and Mabel's ingenuity. arrangements were soon made by which the newly-

arrived party could be comfortably accommodated for the night.

"How happened you to think of coming here, Mabel?" asked Mr. Vaughan, when, supper being concluded and the children gone to bed, she had quietly seated herself beside him, with the satisfied, contented air of one who having suffered much has found a place of repose at last.

"I did not know what else to do, father," was her simple answer.

The same distressed look returned to his face which had marked it on the first announcement of her arrival; he moved uneasily in his chair, glanced at the bare, plastered walls and meagre furniture of their only parlor, and then, gazing at her with mingled pride and pity, ejaculated mournfully, "It is not a fit place for you, my child. I would have spared you this."

Mabel, grieved at perceiving how deeply he felt the trial of seeing his beloved daughter reduced to such humble fortunes, made haste to assure him of her perfect satisfaction and joy in sharing his Western abode. He interrupted her, however, shook his head in a troubled, discontented manner, and glanced once more around the room, saying, "Ah, well! it may do for awhile, perhaps — a week or so, until I get my affairs settled."

It seemed, indeed, as if his paternal grief at the death of Louise was secondary to this one absorbing regret; and as if in contemplating the trials and mortifications to which his favorite child had been suddenly reduced, he had forgotten every other cause of sorrow; for, when at last he took his candle to retire for the night, he laid his hand on Mabel's head, and said in a consolatory tone, "Never mind, my daughter! It is only for a season, while Harry practises a little shooting and I settle up my affairs, and then we will all go home again."

"I am afraid father is sorry I came, Harry," said Mabel, as the brother and sister were also about to separate.

"No, no, indeed," replied Harry; "only he feels, as any body must, that this is a new style of things for you to be

brought to — this bivouac in the wilderness — this hunting-lodge in the prairie — for that is all it is fit for."

"If he only cares on my account — if you are sure of that, Harry, I am content," said Mabel. "He shall see how happy I can be here."

"Dear Mabel," said Harry, looking at her tenderly, "how much you have suffered — how much you have been through since we parted!"

"We will not think of it now," said she, smiling through her tears. "I am with my father and you, Harry. I have nothing more to ask."

CHAPTER XXXI.

But never, in her varied sphere,
Is woman to the soul more dear
Than when the homely task she plies,
With cheerful duty in her eyes;
And, every lowly path well trod,
Looks meekly upward to her God

CAROLINE GILMAN.

"OUT WEST" is an indefinite term, whose limit has never been circumscribed, and never can be fairly reached until civilization, marching on with its measured stride, has set its foot upon every inch of ground between the Atlantic and the Pacific shores. At the time of which we write, however, the States which form the eastern and western boundaries of the Mississippi were the chief theatre of emigration; though many a bold trapper and backwoodsman began to feel the atmosphere oppressive with the breath of numbers, and to yearn for still deeper solitudes.

The tract of land which, about a year before, had recommended itself to Mr. Leroy as a favorable object of speculation, and had subsequently become the joint property of himself and his father-in-law, was a wide and level belt of alternate woodland and prairie, which, stretching for many miles along the shore of a considerable river, afforded an obvious and practicable route for a newly projected railroad. It was with the view of monopolizing the locality, and profiting by the enormous rise in value which was anticipated, that the original purchase had been determined on; and, as the scheme gained new favor in the eyes of the eager speculators, and the subject became more engrossing, larger and larger investments were made, until, at length, all other considerations were excluded, and their landed interests became to both gentlemen a subject of vital importance.

Unfortunately, however, for the realization of their hopes, the River Valley Railroad, with all the expectations which were centred in it, still continued a mere project of the brain. True, it was thought of, talked of, and planned, but as yet the fulfilment of the enterprise was postponed; some believed that the cities which it was destined to connect were not of sufficient importance to warrant the undertaking, and all were agreed to wait until the time was more fully ripe for action;—all, save the disappointed land-owners, whose fortunes and patience could ill brook this unforeseen and fatal delay. Meanwhile, Mr. Leroy's affairs began to suffer embarrassment; a large portion of his capital was embarked in an adventure which yielded him no returns; he was obliged to look to Mr. Vaughan for assistance, and by degrees nearly all his share of the Western property was transferred to his father-in-law, in consideration of heavy sums advanced for his relief. Nor could Mr. Vaughan long sustain the double burden of his own and Mr. Leroy's responsibilities. His resources became gradually crippled, and a train of pecuniary disasters succeeded, which, together with Harry's debts, involved him in financial difficulties to an alarming extent. It was at this crisis that he hastened to the scene where all his hopes for the future were centred, firm in the belief that his presence and influence would give new vigor to the enterprise which was destined to restore and redouble his fortune, and resolved at all hazards and at every sacrifice to pursue the object of his excited anticipations. Thus, when Mr. Leroy's sudden death, his declared insolvency, and the fresh embarrassments which ensued, rendered a large amount of capital necessary for redeeming his remaining share of the property and confirming Mr. Vaughan's shattered credit, the latter hesitated not to adopt the only expedient left him, and part with his residence in New York rather than relinquish his great financial scheme, or admit any new partner to his plans and prospects. And when, finally, having by this desperate remedy secured himself from interference, he relaxed his zealous efforts, and, worn with labor, anxiety, and the shock of disaster, sought for awhile the repose and seclusion of his West-

ern farm-house, it was merely with the view of recruiting his exhausted energies and preparing for a further contest with difficulties and opposition.

That his residence there would be otherwise than temporary, —that Mabel would ever dream of joining him, and sharing his deprivations,—still less that his grandchildren would be brought thither for protection and shelter, had never once entered the old man's busy and overtasked brain; and yet, by a train of circumstances, at once natural and strange, the remnant of his diminished family were united under the humble roof, where they seemed destined for an indefinite period to constitute a common household.

Mabel Vaughan was not the first among the women of this fair land who have suddenly waked from a dream of luxury to the homely realities of Western life. Many are the daughters, mothers, and wives, who, born and reared amid wealth and fashion, have gone out into the wilderness with hearts brave enough to meet adversity, and strong enough to conquer it; proving by their self-denying fortitude, that there is no sphere of life so exalted that it may not be made the school of the humblest virtues, and none so lowly, that it may not become the scene of the purest and most lasting triumphs. Nor is it too much to affirm, that, while manly enterprise and vigor have been put forth with unparalleled energy, the success which has redeemed the waste land, and made the wilderness glad, is no less due to the cheerful sacrifices, the patient toil, and the sympathizing heart of woman.

The sphere into which Mabel was thus suddenly introdu was one which gave scope to every faculty, and taxed her powers to the utmost. There was not only much to do, but much that was to be undone and recommenced, for Harry's boasted housekeeping presented a singular medley of successes and failures, and, in the eyes of a capable woman, a gradual but thorough reformation was essential to domestic comfort. The establishing of order in the household was, however, but a small part of her task. There was an aged father to cheer, a brother to whom her sympathy and companionship were the only safe-

guard, and two orphan boys to be cared for, governed, and educated. The contemplation of the toils and trials which these duties must necessarily involve, might well cause the heart to shrink with dismay, and the hands to refuse their unwonted office. But Mabel did not pause to contemplate them, and here lay her chief security from dejection or apathy. She was strong in youth and health; with spirits which had retained their elasticity in spite of severe discipline, and a heart so imbued with earnest faith and Christian self-devotion that, in the cause of those she loved, no effort could be hopeless, and no labor burdensome. Thus she counted not up her toils, and brooded not upon her difficulties, but setting herself with cheerful alacrity to the work which lay nearest at hand, she performed it with ready zeal, and one by one, unconsciously to herself, the various offices which she filled assumed their due order and significance, and her daily life became a beautiful and a sacred mission.

"Does n't the tea-kettle boil yet, Harry?" exclaimed she, in a lively tone, as she joined her brother in the kitchen the morning after her arrival, and found him engaged in his bachelor task of preparing breakfast.

"Alick," she cried to her little nephew, who was cowering over the fire, "do you see that great heap of pine chips out by the wood pile?—suppose you run out and get some; let Murray go with you, and carry the basket, that's a good boy; run Murray, and get warm. Oh, Harry!" and she lifted a cover, "how beautifully you have broiled that chicken!—you are equal to any French cook, but you have forgotten the coffee!" and she glanced at the empty coffee-pot.

"Just like me," said Harry, good humoredly; "a fair specimen of my ability. I have nearly let the fire out, too."

"Never mind, here comes Alick with his chips; how many times I have helped Mrs. Herbert make the tea-kettle boil on a Sunday evening, when Bridget was away."

A few moments more, and the important omission on Harry's part was amply atoned for;—the coffee was foaming and bubbling merrily. Mabel had placed the white bread, and sweet,

fresh butter, upon the table — a few new-laid eggs had been produced from the cupboard, and everything gave promise of a sumptuous meal.

"Here comes Murray; what has he got?" shouted Alick, as the little fellow entered, rosy and eager with excitement, and hugging to his breast a small, fur-clad animal.

"A 'possum," answered the child, "a live 'possum! James, the farmer, gave it to me."

Alick pressed forward to see this novel pet, Harry laughed, and Mabel exclaimed, "Why, Murray, what would the New York boys say, if they knew you had an opossum? You must get James to make a house for it to live in. Go and take hold of grandfather's hand, Alick," whispered she, "and ask him to walk in to breakfast."

"Boots on top of the flour-barrel, and powder and shot on the same shelf with the sugar-bowl!" was Mabel's inward comment, as, an hour or two later, she made a careful inspection of some of the closets. "That will never do! What is there in that cupboard under the stairs, Alick?" she inquired aloud of her active and willing little assistant.

"Nothing."

"Then that is just the place for boots and shoes; it must have been made for the purpose. The sporting materials must stay here, I suppose, until Uncle Harry can find a better place for them. But this nice China tea-set must be taught to keep better company; how came it among all this crockery and earthen ware, I wonder!"

These and similar marks of carelessness could be corrected on the instant; but it was a less easy task to remedy the numerous inconsistencies which the house and furniture everywhere exhibited.

The plain wooden dwelling, though in many respects convenient, was utterly destitute of ornament, and, in its interior finish, was rough and homely in the extreme. It was one of those cheap structures, which, in the order of progress, rank next to the log house, and which, built solely for purposes of practical utility, offer nothing attractive to the eye, and barely

insure the comfort of their occupants. It had been furnished with the simple necessaries of life by the former owner of the land on which it stood, and came thus into the possession of Mr. Vaughan, having been included in the original purchase of the estate.

Immediately upon Mr. Leroy's arrival in the West, however, when this place became his head-quarters, he had endeavored to make it a comfortable summer residence for himself and his father-in-law, by sending thither from the nearest city those articles of luxurious living, in which it was most obviously deficient; and these being purchased for temporary use, and with little care and discretion, constituted, together with the rude specimens of furniture which had been found there, an incongruous mass of household utensils and appliances, which, thrown together in utter disregard of convenience or good taste, imparted to the rooms a most unsettled and desolate appearance.

But the same quick eye and hand which, a year before, had been so prompt in relieving the dull uniformity of a superb city mansion, knew how to reduce this bewildering chaos to harmony and order; and, although Harry still persisted in playfully styling it a bivouac and an encampment, their dwelling soon assumed, under Mabel's superintendence, all the essential characteristics of a home. It was true no one could be blind to the fact, that the rich and gaily-colored carpet of their only parlor contrasted painfully with the bare, plastered walls and smoke-stained ceiling; that the heavy brass andirons were but little in keeping with the rough, ill-painted chimney-piece and wide brick hearth; that the stuffed arm-chairs and sofa, which were among the imported articles, were strangely at variance with an old pine table and wooden clock, which were as indispensable as they were ugly; and that silver forks and damask napkins only served to make the rude cutlery and clumsy tin coffee-pot more conspicuous features in the breakfast service.

Woman, however, has an art unknown to man, by which due prominence may be given to the attractive side of the domestic

picture, while the reverse is atoned for or kept wholly out of sight; and Mr. Vaughan and Harry were not the first who have felt the power of a cleanly swept hearth, a neat table-cover, a well-ordered meal, a tasteful work-basket, and a box of mignionette in the window, without being able to define the cause of their unwonted sense of comfort.

Upon the unpacking of Mabel's trunk, a treasure had come to light, which had awakened in her many a touching reminiscence and emotion, and which excited Alick to tears and Murray to an ecstasy of delight. It was Rosy's picture of the little pilgrim, packed in a snug corner by Mrs. Hope, and marked on the back in Lydia's hand-writing, with Rosy's dying message, "Give this to my dear Miss Mabel." They hung it on that side of the plastered wall to which Mr. Vaughan's eyes were often turned in his half-absent fits of dejection, where it stood out from the cold white surface, as much alone and as highly prized as in Rosy's humble room, and silently proclaimed those blessed truths of which Rosy's voice and life had furnished the interpretation.

It had been obvious, from the first moment of Mabel's arrival, that nothing would so mortify and distress her father as to see her reduced to the performance of menial offices; and this feeling, which his whole manner conveyed, was expressed almost immediately in the decisive words, "Harry, we must look out at once for servants. James has done very well for us, with what assistance he has been able to obtain in the neighborhood; but the case is quite different now. Even if Mabel should only be here for a week or two, we must have female servants, if there are any such to be obtained, and make her as comfortable as possible."

The saving clause in Mr. Vaughan's remark was well introduced, for the difficulty of securing female help in a new country is proverbial; and, though Harry fully coincided with his father's views, and was indefatigable in his efforts, he met with only partial success, and that not until he was nearly discouraged. At length, however, a young and inexperienced girl, daughter of a recent settler in the vicinity, consented to

enter Mabel's service, and through the latter's perseverance in training both herself and her hand-maiden, some degree of system was introduced into the kitchen department, and there was at least the show of a waiting woman in the establishment.

Of the trials, disappointments, and difficulties, which a young house-keeper endures during her novitiate, most women know something by experience, and most men by hearsay; while all will agree, that no small credit was due to the girl who bore her trials cheerfully, laughed over her disappointments, patiently contended with difficulties, and maintained, meanwhile, a happy contentment of spirit, which spread sunshine through the house, and even forbade her anxious parent to consider her an object of compassion.

Meanwhile, Mr. Vaughan was frequently absent from home, on those excursions which had reference to his scheme of future wealth and aggrandizement, and, on his return, his mind was generally too much abstracted to admit of his making any observation upon his family circumstances, beyond that of the general health and welfare of the household. He accepted the arrangements which were made for his comfort, without seeming to trace them to their source, and sometimes came and went without communicating a single fact connected with his journeyings, or making a single inquiry concerning the events which had transpired in his absence. The roll of charts, descriptive of his landed property, was usually spread out before him, upon the table, and when not actually engaged in consulting it, he would restlessly pace the room; while, more than once, Mabel was startled by hearing his step in the night time, and, on hastily descending the stairs, discovered him, in night-cap and dressing-gown, poring over the engrossing maps, tracing out the course of the river, or the boundary line of his estates. "Go back to bed, my child," he would say, looking up from his labors, but not removing his finger from the place which it marked; "I am sorry I disturbed you; I only wished to satisfy my mind upon a certain point."

"I thought you might be ill," Mabel would perhaps remark;

and he in his turn would answer, a little impatiently, "Ill? Oh, no, I am perfectly well,— perfectly."

The autumn, however, was fast changing into winter, and the subject of a return to New York was as wholly dropped as if such a thing had never been contemplated. Time did not appear to hang heavily upon Harry's hands; he was out almost constantly with his dog and gun, and his health and figure were becoming robust under the influence of this active life. Nor did Mabel's high hopes suffer any diminution, nor her fears become in any degree excited, on his account, although his frequent and prolonged shooting excursions brought him into contact, not only with the reckless hunter and backwoodsman, but, also, with many a gay sporting-party from Canada and the Western cities, who were, at this season, finding recreation in the hunting grounds of the West. He invariably returned home laden with game, which was no trifling feature in their larder; and, by his thoughtfulness for Mabel's comfort, by his anxiety to lighten her cares in providing for the wants of the family, and by the exercise of a discretion and good judgment which had never before characterized him, he gave evidence of his growth in manly purpose and true generosity of heart.

Mabel's social deprivations might seem one of the most striking trials of her lot. But although her father and brother were much from home, and the neighborhood offered few advantages, she found more than enough in her present situation to compensate for all she had lost by the exchange of a crowded city for a life on the open prairie.

The children were her constant companions. Alick could not long be contented out of her sight, and the chivalrous devotion which had marked his demeanor on their journey suffered no diminution at its termination. He was her invariable attendant and fellow laborer, and under her sunny influence the best traits of his character were rapidly developing; while Murray, in the keen enjoyment of simple pleasures, was overcoming the false tastes and unreasonable temper which were due to flattery, and the injurious influences that hotel life is sure to exert upon a child.

But there was still another source from which Mabel derived sweet and welcome companionship, learning in the exercise of a warm and tender friendship how much more precious is the intercourse with one true and congenial mind, than with hundreds of those chance acquaintances who are thoughtlessly termed friends.

She was standing one day at the front window of her parlor, watching the boys who were at play outside, when her attention was attracted by a little, shaggy, white pony, approaching the house at a quick canter. As the village had been laid out with reference to that immense growth which it had not yet attained, and a wide open common intervened between Mr. Vaughan's residence and the opposite street, the figure of the rider, who, regardless of the beaten track, pursued a direct course over the rolling prairie ground, was strongly defined on the open space and against the clear blue sky, and was watched by Mabel with intense interest and curiosity. It was a young, slight, and delicate-looking girl, who, dressed in a light gray habit, with a straw hat, bound and tied with green ribbon, and her fair hair floating on the breeze, presented a novel and picturesque appearance. She rode with careless ease and grace, and seemed to guide and control her little steed by a species of magic, for as she drew near the house she suddenly threw the reins on its neck, checked it with a word, and springing lightly from its back, apparently bestowed no further thought upon the animal, which followed her for a few paces, then tossed its head, snuffed the air, and bounded to a little distance, where it stopped and quietly commenced grazing.

Gathering her skirts lightly in her hand, — they were not so long as to interfere materially with her walking,— she came tripping up to the door, but did not appear to be in haste, for seeing the children, she paused in evident surprise, stooped down and stroked the head of Harry's dog, with which they were playing, and asked them a few questions, to which, however, she failed to obtain satisfactory answers. Mabel was just considering whether she should go to meet this unexpected visitor, when, without the ceremony of a knock, the door was opened

and she entered unannounced, with several letters and papers in her hand, which she was about to lay upon the table and retire; but seeing Mabel, she paused, blushed slightly, then with the simple confidence of one who has never known cause for more than momentary embarrassment, advanced and cordially extended her hand. "It is Miss Vaughan," exclaimed she, with unaffected astonishment and pleasure. "But I did not know you had come. I had no idea you thought of coming. I am very glad to see you."

Mabel shook the young girl's hand warmly, for her appearance was very prepossessing; she could not, however, disguise the curiosity she felt concerning her, and the little horsewoman ingenuously responded to it in the words — "I am Helen Gracie, the clergyman's daughter, the village letter carrier, my father's curate, and your father's earliest acquaintance in the place, and medical adviser, too, I may say, if you will not think me proud."

Many more were the titles to honor and to love which Helen might with equal truth, though not with equal modesty, have claimed; for this fair flower of the wilderness, this lily of the prairie, as she was rightly termed, was known and beloved for a circuit of twenty miles around, and the various offices she filled were as numerous as they were beneficent.

It was enough for Mabel, however, that she recognized in her the gentle nurse who had ministered to her father's wants, and earnestly pressing the little hand which had applied the healing balsam and prepared the wholesome nourishment for her wounded and invalid parent, she proceeded to thank her in no measured terms for the friendly and neighborly part she had played. She had heard her father speak frequently of Miss Gracie's attentions, and Harry, too, had referred to her by name; but having pictured to herself some ancient and withered crone, laden with a huge bag of herbs, and prating of her skill, she could not sufficiently express her pleasure at this agreeable surprise.

Helen, however, disclaimed all praise; she had merely recommended an application for Mr. Vaughan's sprain, which

had fortunately proved effectual, and the dear old gentleman's kindness had made it a pleasure to ride over and inquire after his health. She then apologized for her present intrusion, by saying that she had frequently been in the habit, during the summer, of calling and leaving the letters, on her way from the post-office to a neighboring settlement which she visited almost daily, and as Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Leroy were seldom at home, she usually came in and left them on the table. Mabel, charmed with her fresh and lady-like simplicity, begged that she would always thus dispense with ceremony; and, Helen having been persuaded to take a seat, the two girls were soon chatting together with a freedom which gave the promise of speedy intimacy and mutual happiness in each other's society.

There was no question which Mabel could ask concerning the country, or the neighborhood, to which Helen could not give a prompt and intelligent answer, and no advice or counsel which she required in her present circumstances, which her new friend was not competent to bestow; for Helen had been born in the West, and the greater part of her young life had been passed in this very locality, to which her father, a devoted minister of the gospel, had brought his only child in her infancy, and where, unbiassed by worldly prejudice, he had reared and educated her according to his own ideas of female loveliness and duty.

"You have been a housekeeper ten years!" exclaimed Mabel, as Helen laughingly declared that her experience dated back to that remote period. Then, reviewing with a smile the sweet, infantile features which seemed to mock the assertion, she added, "No one would believe you such a veteran in the service; but I shall take you at your word, and rely on your advice in all domestic matters, as well as in the wider range of subjects we have been discussing. If you please, before you go," for Helen was about to depart, "will you step into the kitchen, and tell me if Melissa's bread is risen enough to put into the pans?"

And Helen accepted the invitation with the same playful

air with which it was given, and the bread was all the better for her suggestions.

She then spoke her farewell, and the pony, obedient to its mistress' call, came trotting up with the playful and waggish capers of a little dog. "Will you take a ride, sir?" said Helen to Murray, who stood attentively watching the animal's motions.

The courageous boy answered readily in the affirmative, and in an instant the lively girl had lifted him to the saddle, and was laughing merrily at his delight, as she led the docile pony round in a wide circle; then helping him to alight, she sprung into his place, waved her hand gaily to Mabel, who stood watching them in the doorway, and cantered off over the prairie in an opposite direction to that from which she had come.

A moment after Harry crossed the bridge, and emerging from the thicket which bordered the river, joined Mabel on the doorstep, while the figure of Helen was still in sight, though gradually lessening in the distance.

"I do believe," exclaimed he, "you have had a visit from that little desert sprite. This is the third time I have come up just in season to see her beat a retreat, and never yet have I had a glimpse of her face, though father speaks of her so familiarly that she can not be utterly a myth."

"Harry," said Mabel with enthusiasm, "she is the dearest little creature in the world."

"I have had a suspicion of the fact," replied Harry, "but that is all. I invariably catch sight of her riding off as she is now, with her curls floating behind her, and almost think she sees me coming and makes her escape on the instant."

"She lives in the cottage yonder; you can see the smoke from the chimney," said Mabel. "We are the best of friends already, and I have promised to return her visit soon; you must go with me."

Harry did so, not unwillingly; and as time passed on and the intimacy between the families continued to ripen, Mabel's declaration and his suspicions regarding their new friend seemed destined to become confirmed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Labour is good for man, bracing up his energies to conquest,
And without it life is dull, the man perceiving himself useless.
M. F. Tupper.

The short, frosty days of winter were gradually giving way to the bright influences of spring, though as yet there was little indication in the bare, brown prairie, the leafless trees, or the chilly atmosphere, of any other reign than that of the wintry tyrant. The sun, however, rode higher in the firmament and continued longer above the horizon, and the light snows which fell now and then during the night, could not resist the power which his rays had acquired at noon. It was that season when good housewives improve the long days for the accomplishment of what they term their spring work; and Mabel, in virtue of her thriftiness, devoted all the time she could spare from her other vocations, to the diligent plying of her needle, a species of industry which the family wants imperatively demanded.

She was sitting at the window towards the close of an afternoon in the early part of April, busily occupied at her sewing, and Harry, at the opposite side of the room, was engaged with a book. Mr. Vaughan was absent on one of his frequent excursions; the boys, wrapped in their warm great coats, had gone with James the farmer to enjoy his skill in calling together the cows, which had strayed to a distance, and the house was quiet and undisturbed. Occasionally Harry laid down his book and yawned, then rose, gazed first from one window and then another, and finally resuming his seat, with his elbow resting on the half-closed volume, watched Mabel attentively and thoughtfully, as, unconscious of observation she stitched away on the garment, which she was anxious to finish that evening. Neither of them had spoken for a half hour or

more, when Harry suddenly startled his sister with the abrupt remark, "Mabel, I am tired of this kind of life; I am going to work."

She lifted her earnest, brown eyes for an instant to his face, with a half incredulous, half inquiring look, then dropped them again and kept on sewing.

"It does very well," continued he, "to call our farm-house here a bivouac, an encampment, and a hunting-lodge. It sounds temporary, and seems encouraging, and answers for a jest; but it is no jesting matter, — this Western life to which we have become reduced — it is a sober reality."

Mabel made no reply; she only looked more steadily at her work. He studied her face for a moment, but could not read its expression, the features were so fixed. "All we can do now is to make the best of it," said he, as he rose once more and walked up and down the room. Then pausing opposite to her he exclaimed, in a tone at once emphatic and full of deep and tender feeling, "Mabel, this is all a humbug — this great scheme of father's. The poor old gentleman is laboring under a delusion."

Her head dropped lower and lower on her bosom, a great tear fell upon her needle and glittered like a dewdrop, — another blinded her eye; still she feigned to be busy as ever with her work.

"He is wasting his life away chasing after a shadow. Did you know it?" asked Harry, in a tone of gentle, anxious inquiry.

She answered only by an affirmative nod. She had known it so long; she had read it so many times in the old man's face; she had felt it so to her heart's core, and treasured it there so religiously, as a fatal secret, that now to hear it spoken out, and to find herself assenting to the truth, seemed almost like a sacrilege, or the betrayal of a trust.

"And you knew that the rest of the property was lost; that every thing had been sacrificed to this hopeless speculation; that the New York house and all its contents went under the hammer long ago; and that this was our only home?"

Harry put these questions in quick succession, as each received the same silent but expressive reply with which Mabel had responded to his first query; then added, gazing into her face meanwhile with wonder and admiration, "So you have never been blinded for a moment to the true state of things? You have never been deceived by all the prophecies of better days? You have realized from the beginning that we were a ruined family, and yet you have seemed as cheerful as if we were at the top of fortune's ladder, and have labored as steadily as if you had the most brilliant ends in view! I never would have believed it of any woman. Mabel, you are an angel!"

"No, I am not an angel," said she, looking up with a half smile; "nor are we a ruined family. I have learned to appreciate a home if it is ever so humble; and if it were not for *his* disappointment, of which I can not bear to think, we might be very happy yet. You, and the boys, and I, will all acknowledge that this winter has been much better spent than the last."

"Yes, in the highest and best sense, we have all improved," said Harry; "and we know who we have to thank for it. You and I have been but idle dogs," continued he, patting the head of his favorite setter, "but we have at least done no harm for the last six months, and one of us has not found the time wholly wasted, since it has sown the seeds of some good resolutions. Yes, Mabel, your industry and patience have been at once a reproach and an incentive to me. I am determined to be no longer a drone in the hive — I am going to work."

There was a manly earnestness in Harry's tone which made it impossible to doubt his sincerity, and Mabel, both by voice and countenance, expressed an eager interest and pleasure in his declaration, which encouraged him to explain himself still further.

It seemed that the young man's time during the winter months had not been wholly devoted to hunting, though it was on an excursion of this nature that the impulse became awakened which eventually led to important results. He had gone to a greater distance than usual from home, and in company

with some young English officers from beyond the Canadian frontier, had been on the track of a deer which had recently been seen in the vicinity, and, in the engrossing interest of the chase, had become separated from his companions just at the close of the short winter's day. In the darkness which immediately ensued, he was for some hours lost in the forest; but at length, guided by the friendly light of a log hut, he succeeded in reaching a place of shelter, which he recognized as the cabin of an Indian half-breed who had once before been his host on a similar occasion.

But he was not now, as before, the only guest. A rival huntsman had preceded him, and, outside the door, lay the carcass of the deer, slain by this successful follower of the chase. It proved, however, to be neither of Harry's previous companions who had thus borne away the honors, but an accidental competitor for the prize, who, travelling in the neighborhood, was indebted to his quick eye and ready rifle for a success which he could scarcely be said to have sought. The stranger was a young man, not many years Harry's senior, and in the close proximity to which the new lodgers were subjected in their narrow quarters, an acquaintance naturally ensued, which the next day's journey, passed in each other's society, was also destined to confirm.

The manners and bearing of the expert hunter had at once proclaimed him to be a gentleman, and his knowledge and cultivation proved him to be one of no ordinary attainments; for, while his whole conversation was marked by elevation of sentiment and refinement of taste, his information ranged over a wide field of topics, and he seemed equally at home on a question of foreign policy, or the details of Western farming. Of the latter he had, considering his youth, enjoyed a large experience — enjoyment being most truly the term for expressing the enthusiastic and hearty interest which he felt in the growth and development of the resources afforded by the extensive plantation lands of which he was the proprietor. These lands were not very far distant from one portion of Mr. Vaughan's estate; and as Harry listened to the young stranger's animated account

of his own successful experiments in agriculture, and the almost fabulous crops which the rich soil was capable of yielding, his attention was, for the first time, directed to the uncommon facilities he himself possessed for embarking in similar pursuits.

Mr. Vaughan's Western property, although purchased solely with reference to one absorbing scheme, included large tracts of arable land, which, at present lying waste, might be easily brought under cultivation. Industry and perseverance alone were wanting to compel them to yield their tribute. The broad acres which had disappointed the eager speculator might yet reward the patient husbandman; and while the father only dreamed of golden harvests, the son might sow and reap them.

The ambition thus awakened was not destined to die out for want of encouragement. The accident which had introduced Harry to the owner of a model farm, had also secured to him a wise counsellor and a judicious friend;—a man who had the force and energy of character which are calculated to command influence, and the disinterested and lofty aims which insure its being exercised in a right direction. Moreover, he seemed to have Harry's welfare particularly at heart, and spared no pains to establish his manly purposes, and aid him in their accomplishment. He invited him to visit his estate, pointed out the evidences of remarkable success and occasional failure which constituted his own experience, and accompanied him on a survey of that part of his father's land which was best adapted to agricultural purposes.

Thus, at the opening of spring, Harry's plans were ripe, and he himself ready and eager for action. The simple structure which was for the present to constitute his dwelling, was already in process of erection, and he had only delayed communicating these facts to Mabel because he dreaded to disclose those other truths which were involved in his decision, and which, he feared, would prove crushing to her hopes.

He had not counted on that womanly instinct which could not be deceived in reference to their broken fortunes, nor measured the strength of that woman's heart which rose superior

to the shock. Nor had he anticipated, therefore, the exultant and joyful emotions which the revelation of his own projects awakened in his warm-hearted and sympathizing sister. Not only was the thought of honest labor, in the tilling of the generous soil, attractive to her newly-developed tastes, but, in devoting himself with such ardor to the work, Harry had set the seal, as it were, to his hoped-for reformation. If there was one thing she had dreaded for him more than another, it was idleness, the almost certain harbinger of evil. That temptation was now at an end; and, looking through the long vista of coming years, Mabel seemed, with prophetic vision to behold her stripling brother, over whose idleness and folly she had often wept bitter tears, developing into the athletic, honored, redeemed, and useful citizen.

"We shall miss you sadly, Harry," said she, when the story of his plans and expectations was fully told; "but oh, how happy you will be! and what a fund of interest we shall have in your new farm and its prospects!"

"You will not be ashamed of me then, when I come home on my Sunday visits?"

"Ashamed? I shall glory in you, Harry. I only wish you were to be with us constantly; and I do not quite understand now why you thought it best to commence operations on such a distant part of the property."

"For many reasons," answered Harry. "First and foremost, the advantages of transportation are infinitely better there. For more than two miles the land borders on the canal, and there is a large and growing city some twenty miles distant, which will furnish a permanent market for grain. Then, although you and I appreciate the dignity of labor, and feel its necessity, it is quite the reverse with father, who still clings to his charts, and sees a fortune marked out on them. It would be a daily torture to him to watch the upturning of this land, for any purpose so humble as that to which I propose to convert it. Besides, I am not sure but what influences me more than anything else is the fact that my friend Percival's farm will be within half a day's ride of my own. By the way,

Mabel," added he, observing an eager lighting up of her countenance, "I did not think, did I, to tell you that my excellent, whole-souled neighbor is the son of your charming old lady — and she is a fine old lady, to be sure. I saw her for the first time last week. She inquired particularly after you and the children, and sent her love, which I should think you would be proud to have."

"I am, indeed," exclaimed Mabel with delight, "and proud that you should have her son for a friend; he must be a noble man, educated by such a mother. Why did you not tell me this before? It wholly alters the case. What a pleasant coincidence! and how fortunate you are, Harry! You will have constant enjoyment in the society of that family. I almost envy you the privilege of living near our dear Madam Percival."

Harry laughed at her enthusiasm, but, at the same time acknowledged how fully he shared it. "Although I have learned by experience," said he, "to be cautious in forming friendships, or boasting of them, I do believe that Percival's example, and the influence of his cheerful, high-toned character, will do more than anything else to save me from becoming disheartened and desponding, — especially as I shall not always have you at hand, May. It is strange what a recollection constantly haunts me of having seen his handsome face somewhere before. I cannot help thinking I must have met him when I was travelling in Europe. I told him so the other day, when he spoke of having been abroad, but he only answered — 'possibly.'"

As the season was now nearly at hand when Harry's presence would be constantly required at his farm, and many of his arrangements were still incomplete, his communication to Mabel was but the precursor to his bidding her farewell, and a few weeks later saw him established in his bachelor's cottage, at about thirty miles distance, which, with the exception of an occasional visit to his family, thenceforward constituted his permanent residence. His father, incredulous of his perseverance, and indifferent to such trivial schemes, assented

readily to the proposition which his son made, in due form, for the use of the land, but manifested neither interest nor confidence in the result. Mabel, on the other hand, strong in hope, and relying on Harry's diligence and skill, encouraged him with her strong faith, and strengthened him with words of cheer; and Harry, remembering and believing in the promises, sowed his seed in the morning, and in the evening withheld not his hand; and the early and the latter rain watered and refreshed his furrows, and finally, when the autumn came, the earth brought forth her increase.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

> To nurse the sickness, to assuage the care,
> To charm the sigh into the happier prayer;
> Forestall the unuttered wish with ready guess;
> Wise in the exquisite tact of tenderness.
>
> New Timon.

A letter from Mabel to Mrs. Herbert, written about a year and a half subsequent to her arrival in the West, furnishes, in her own words, the best index to her mode of life, and the successive changes which had, within that period, transpired in the household. It ran as follows: —

"Dear Mrs. Herbert: — Your kind New Year's letter, with all the pleasant reminiscences, affectionate messages, and loving inquiries from yourself and the dear girls, was a most welcome proof of the tender interest with which you have followed me to my new home, and claims a hearty response; though before I have answered half your questions, I fear you will weary of my Western experiences. We have now passed two winters in our new home, and begin to feel ourselves old settlers; — the more so, as no less than thirty families have established themselves in the village since our arrival. As we are a little on the outskirts of the town, however, we have no near neighbor, except Mr. Gracie, the clergyman, who lives across the opposite bit of prairie, and who, with his daughter, are our most intimate and esteemed friends. I have frequently spoken of Helen in my letters, so her name and many points of her disposition and character are no doubt familiar to you. But you cannot imagine the treasure she has been to me, ever since the first moment of our acquaintance. Next to yourself, there is no one to whom I am so much indebted for the ease and pleasure with which I have been enabled to

adapt myself to our new circumstances. Care sits so lightly on her shoulders, and she knows so well how to combine employment and recreation, that in her society the most important duties cease to be burdensome, and little mishaps afford only new occasion for merriment. The children of the rough backwoodsmen, who are among her father's parishioners, hear the sound of her horse's feet, and run to meet her the moment she is in sight, sure of some trifling gift, a story, or a ride on the pony, which seems to be common property. If she goes with her basket of medicines to visit the sick, at a distance, she comes back so laden with flowers, you would think she had been a Maying; and an old Canadian Indian woman, to whom she daily reads a chapter in her French Bible, declares her voice more musical than running water. I have never seen father so abstracted with the cares of business that he has not a pleasant word for his fairy nurse, as he calls her, and no bribe is so effectual with the boys, or inducement rather (for I, like you, scorn the use of bribes), as the promise of an evening visit to Helen. As for Harry — but never mind about Harry — sisters are so suspicious, you know, where their brothers are concerned.

"I wish you could see Harry, Mrs. Herbert; you would never recognize in him the youthful dandy who wore such exquisite straw-colored kid gloves, and boasted such a faultless necktie. Not that he has grown slovenly — quite the reverse — but, except under his curls, where his forehead is as white as ever, his complexion is completely embrowned by the sun; his figure has become broad and firmly knit, and he lifts me in his arms as if I was only a feather's weight; while the lassitude of manner which was always apparent in him, has given place to the quick, earnest movements of a man with determined motives in life and an honorable aim. Then too, he is so happy, and brings such animation into the house whenever he returns home for a day or two, and I am so proud of him! Dear Mrs. Herbert, you must come out here sometime or other, and see what a worthy member of society you have helped, by your influence, to rear. My boys, too, I consider in some degree objects of

your training, for they are daily practising the same round of lessons in which, I now thank you most sincerely for having me thoroughly drilled. I am their only teacher, except that Alick studies Greek for an hour every day with Mr. Gracie, and their improvement is regular and encouraging. Murray is backward and rather dull at his books, though a very smart boy at his play. He is a good reader, but has not yet learned to spell correctly; and he experiences all the distaste I once had for the Latin Grammar, which he is just commencing; he has lately made great progress in his Arithmetic, which I attribute entirely to his uncle Harry's having told him, on his last visit to us, that he must devote himself especially to Mathematics, if he ever wished to become an engineer, a vocation on which he has set his heart. I hope I shall be equally fortunate in suggesting an impulse which shall influence him in other pursuits. With Alick I am obliged to adopt quite another course; the only fear being, that he will injure himself by his devotion to books. He devours all the reading matter which comes in his way, and his greediness for knowledge is insatiable. I am obliged to invent out-of-door employments for him, and entice him into the open air by every possible means, lest his health should suffer from too close application. He is a remarkable child, and the responsibility of his moral and mental training would alarm me, if I were not blessed with the aid of our good Mr. Gracie, who is as judicious and lovely in his disposition as he is wonderful in his attainments. We do, indeed, enjoy a rare privilege in having such a man for our friend and pastor. His little church is a fountain of good works, and his life, as well as his preaching, is a beautiful illustration of the Christian doctrine. Beside Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, in which he is a proficient, he is an excellent French and German scholar, and is so versed in the natural sciences that he is able to impart a lively interest to all our simple pursuits and pleasures. You will naturally wonder that the talents of this gifted man should be restricted to so narrow a sphere; but it gives added power and beauty to his self-sacrificing labors, that he left a flourishing church at the Eastward, and came hither

in a truly missionary spirit. He is the only man in the neighborhood who is my father's equal in years, and each seems to find pleasure and benefit in the other's society.

"Of my housekeeping I have already furnished you, in past letters, with many of the details. I never can be thankful enough for those lessons in domestic economy which I learned under your roof, and which, although uncalled for during one short winter in New York, have been invaluable ever since. I do not believe that people generally realize how much girls acquire from observation, and how much of their future skill in every branch of household matters is due to this sort of unconscious training.

"Do you remember how perseveringly Em and I used to watch all your operations in the kitchen on baking days, artfully suggesting the propriety of your testing the heat of the oven with a taster, of whose merits, when well baked, we expected to be the judges? I was reminded of it, and had reason to thank you for your patience with us, when, on occasion of my making my first Thanksgiving pies, Helen Gracie came over to assist me, and declared she knew I must be an expert in the business, from the manner in which I held the rolling-pin, buttered the paste, etc., in all which proceedings I was only the creature of imitation. I still retain Melissa in my service, thanks to the attractions of James, the farmer, who seems very slow to comprehend the partiality with which he is regarded by my handmaiden. James is not what our neighbors would call a forehanded man, and is blind to his own interests in more ways than one. He is at liberty to cultivate as much of my father's land as he pleases, at the halves, and yet he is so wanting in energy that I can not perceive the slightest extent in the boundaries of his wheat and corn fields, or in the number of his flocks and herds, which can be maintained so easily in this excellent grazing country.

"You refer to my lack of books, periodicals, etc., but in this respect I enjoy a rare advantage. Harry resides at only ten miles distance from a beautiful estate, called the Lake Farm, owned by a gentleman of taste and cultivation, with whose

venerable mother I have the privilege of claiming a warm friendship. From them I receive regularly everything that is new and valuable in English literature; and have also derived great encouragement in the study of German, which Helen and I are pursuing together, and for which I contrive to reserve a little time every day, in spite of my numerous avocations;—for I have learned the truth of what you used to tell us, dear Mrs. Herbert, that the more we have to do, the more time we find to do it in.

"I wish I could close this long letter by giving you favorable accounts of my father's health, in which you always express so kind an interest. You would think him greatly changed; his hair is snowy white, his figure attenuated and bent, and he suffers from a slight lameness, consequent upon his injuries at the time of the railroad disaster. If, however, he could be persuaded to relinquish the cares and anxieties of business, which I trust may soon be the case, we might still hope to see him enjoy tranquility and length of days; and for this happy termination of his arduous life, I never cease to pray. With the warmest love to Sue, Em, and Charlie, and those of the girls who were my fellow pupils,

"Ever truly and affectionately yours,

"MABEL VAUGHAN."

About this time Mabel received a communication through the post-office, which proved the occasion of much thought, and eventually of decisive action. Upon first perusing it, her countenance expressed a just and generous indignation, and this continued to be the prevailing tone of her feelings during the remainder of the day. The quiet evening hours afforded, however, an opportunity for meditation, and for holding counsel with her father, who assented to her suggestions with his usual air of indifference to all things connected with their present mode of life, and the next morning gave evidence of the conclusion to which she had arrived; for, after carefully inspecting the size and furniture of their best vacant room, taking an inventory, as it were, of its contents, and of the various

comforts which that and the house generally afforded, she seated herself at her little table, and committed her thoughts to paper:—

"Dear Aunt Sabiah:—thus she wrote—I have been wandering about the house for the last half hour, asking myself whether the cottage-roofed chamber above can be made warm in winter, and cool in summer, whether the stairs are not too steep for any but youthful feet to climb, whether our parlor is not too contracted for comfort, and the view from its windows too strange and dreary to ever wear the look of home; and I have concluded, in spite of all disadvantages, that, with love on our side, and the earnest wish to make you happy, you would be far more comfortable here, than in my aunt Ridgeway's spacious and richly-furnished mansion. I never dared say this before. I never ventured to breathe the hope I have long had at heart, for I knew your love of old associations, and your dislike of change. But your last letter has made me bold. I cannot bear the thought that you are subjected to such trials, such hardships, and such absolute indignities, as I plainly perceive you have lately been made to suffer, when here you would be independent, appreciated, and beloved. It is true we have not, as we once had, luxuries to offer, but we have all the necessaries and most of the comforts of life, and these, too, in abundance; for our Western lands are so lavish in their produce, that hospitality with us almost ceases to be a virtue. Then, too, although my father, as you well know, has sacrificed everything but this Western property for the payment of his debts, and is unwilling to dispose of any portion of the estate at present, Harry is gradually bringing a large part of it under cultivation, and, if his success continues, the rent which he insists upon paying, will not only furnish us with every needed supply, but enable us to lay by something for the children's education. So, even if your poor hands are disabled with the rheumatism, you need not fear that your presence here will be the burden which you say it is to my aunt Margaret. On the contrary, we shall hail your coming with

delight, and shall rejoice to contribute in every way to your happiness. I have consulted father, who quite agrees with me in my view of the matter, and will, I am sure, be rejoiced to welcome you. The boys are improving very much as they grow older, and now that they have such an ample play-ground, you will not suffer at all from their noise. Our village shop-keeper goes to the eastward every spring for the purchase of goods, and will be a most excellent escort on the journey. You see I am quite taking it for granted you will come, but it is because I feel so truly, dear aunt, that your rightful and natural place is at our hearth-stone, as well as in our hearts; and because I know you so well that I venture to believe you will not disappoint the earnest wishes and hopes of

"Your own dear, loving

"MABEL."

This cordial invitation, as Mabel had justly anticipated, resulted in the arrival of Aunt Sabiah, who, so far from refusing the summons, accepted it with joyful gratitude; and one evening in the month of May, the parlor door was suddenly thrown open, and Murray rushed in, waving a stick in his hand, and exclaiming, "She 's come! I've seen her! I saw her old black bonnet just getting out of the stage."

"Run, then, and help bring her parcels up to the house," cried Mabel. "See, Alick has got the start of you already," and, without waiting for bonnet or shawl, she herself hastened to meet her aunt, who, left by the inexorable stage-driver, according to his custom, at the turn of the road, was looking about her with a bewildered air. A moment more, and Sabiah was toiling up the gentle slope which led to the house, leaning on the arm of her joyfully excited niece, whose circle of loved ones was now complete, while Alick and Murray, whose shout of welcome had been followed by eager offers of assistance, were stumbling along as they best might, laden with the traveller's smaller articles of baggage.

"Bless my heart, do see them boys!" cried Sabiah, as Murray rushed past with a band-box on his head (upside down, as

an examination of its contents afterwards proved), and Alick might be heard breathing hard, as he followed behind, tugging at a small, old-fashioned trunk. "Now ain't they grown considerate and strong? La's me! they do n't look like the same children; and how civil spoken they are, too! And so I've got here at last, have I?" continued she, as she entered the family sitting-room, and weary with her long journey, sank into the nearest chair, exhausted, and not a little agitated. "Well, it's a long road, but it has come to a blessed end;" and after fumbling in vain with a trembling hand at her shawl pin and bonnet strings, she submitted, as she never had submitted in her life before, while Mabel, kneeling on the floor beside her, gently removed her various wrappings, and succeeded in discovering her cap amid the chaos which Murray had created in the band-box.

Nor was it merely the fatigue of travelling, and the agitation of arrival, which had reduced Sabiah to helplessness and dependence. Two years residence with Mrs. Ridgway had accomplished what her mother's injustice and fretfulness, and years of loneliness and neglect had failed to do; and with a spirit and health utterly broken, and a self-reliant will entirely subdued by her sister's hard and overbearing treatment, the crushed, enfeebled, and prematurely aged woman had thankfully sought the repose and shelter of her brother's humble home, and Mabel's unquestioned affection.

And how welcome were they to the aching heart which, amid the abodes of wealth, had sighed for some quiet, unpretending spot, where, without the oppressive sense of intrusion or restraint, she might spend the remainder of her days in a round of simple usefulness, and in an atmosphere of love. Mabel would scarcely have apologized in her letter for the plain furniture, the clumsy stair-case, the low-roofed rooms, or the solitude of the place, could she have foreseen the sense of peace and security which their very simplicity imparted to her aunt, awakening at once the thought, "Here I can feel at home!" Nor would she for a moment have doubted her own unaided power to make the new inmate happy, could she have

realized the ever increasing satisfaction with which the desolate heart would treasure up for days and years her first impulsive outbreak, as she threw her arms around the tottering figure, exclaiming, "Dear aunt, we have got you back at last; we shall never let you go again!"

"Well, really now, Mabel," said Sabiah, as she seated herself after tea, at a window, and drawing a huge ball of yarn from her pocket, commenced setting up a stocking, "I don't see such a great difference, after all, between this country and what I've been used to at the East. That 'ere great field, prairie, or whatever you call it, is pretty much like our meadows at home, only it ain't fenced off; and rivers are rivers anywhere, and always will run down hill, and trees are trees, and sky's sky, and as to the people, you say they 're most all New England settlers so I do n't see as there 's anything heathenish about the place after all."

"Heathenish!" exclaimed Mabel, who had been replacing the tea-cups in the closet, putting the room in order, and arranging everything pleasantly for the evening, but who now came and stood looking over her aunt's shoulder, "who calls this noble country heathenish?"

"Oh, your aunt Margaret calls it by that name, and plenty that are worse."

"I was going to say I should resent the charge," said Mabel, laughing; "but I should have so many more serious ones to settle with her first on your account, aunt, that her abuse of the country merely, would come very low on the list; so we must let it pass, I suppose. But these boundless woods, and lakes, and prairies, are well able to defend themselves;—they excite one's activity and energy, too, by their richness and munificence. I am sure I never look upon them without feeling strengthened for everything that is good, and great, and generous."

"La, dear," said Aunt Sabiah, "you never needed to look out of doors to learn that; you always had it in you. Have n't you given up everything for other folks? Did n't Louise impose upon you as long as she lived? And were n't you the

making of Harry? And don't these healthy, good behaved boys speak for themselves? And I — well, I can't speak — I can only just thank the Lord inwardly for my share of the blessing, and pray that you may get your reward one of these days — that's all."

"Reward, aunt!" said Mabel, fervently, "I have done little enough, and have wasted many a good opportunity that will never come again, — but what reward can I ask that I have not got already? — my duties all bring their pleasures with them. I am so proud of Harry, and the boys and I love each other so dearly, — and I have got my good auntie back to knit stockings for us all, and — but here comes my father," and her playful tone changed to one of deep sadness; "I cannot boast that I have kept him well and strong; — poor old gentleman — see how changed he is."

"Can that be my brother John? Well, he is altered, I declare, — but it is n't your fault, child; — he has grown old, to be sure, though," and Mabel and her aunt watched him with mournful interest, as, alighting from a shabby wagon, he fastened his jaded horse to a post, with the air of one not yet familiarized to the necessity of performing such offices for himself, and then walked feebly in the direction of the house. He seemed really glad to see Sabiah; there was something touching, too, in his reception of her, as if misfortunes had replaced him in the position from which she had never arisen, and so united them more closely in interest and in heart. He felt instinctively that she would not perceive or suffer from the deficiences in his present establishment, and there was something soothing in the sight of her, and in the thought that she would relieve Mabel's solitude, and perhaps share the labors to which he could not, though he strove to, be blind; and so, whatever her fears might have been in regard to the welcome she should receive from her brother, they were relieved at once by his manner, and Sabiah felt herself fully installed in the household.

And now succeeded days, months, and even years, of almost uninterrupted calm. Mabel's life, like most human lives, had

presented a period of rapid incident, startling vicissitudes, sudden bereavement, and great and increasing responsibilities. But to her, as to most persons who have experienced such a crisis, there had come a season when the spirits of revolution, disquiet, and change, which are ever rife in the world, seemed for a time to have forsaken Mr. Vaughan's quiet dwelling, and time in its noiseless and scarcely realized progress, marked no striking or memorable event on the household calendar. Harry still continued at his farm, gradually widening the limits of his rich grain lands, planting young orchards, building store-houses and barns, and reaping the fruits of his manly toil in the high health, cheerful spirits, and sturdy independence, which are the sure rewards of honest and well-directed labor. From this source, too, his father's family derived their chief means of support; for though Mr. Vaughan had scorned to receive his son's yearly appropriation in the form of rent, and seemed with strange pertinacity to ignore the wants of his household, he could not shut his eyes to the fact that all the family supplies were forwarded by Harry, nor could he be insensible to the comforts which were purchased with the surplus cash, paid regularly into Mabel's hands, and by her expended for the common good.

The old man persisted, however, in considering these mere temporary expedients, and still continued to dream by night and day of the prospective fortune which he and his children were yet to realize, forgetting, in his sad infatuation, that on a swifter and a surer road than that for the success of which he planned and schemed, his only adversary, relentless time, was steadily bearing him downward to the grave.

Meanwhile, Sabiah's bruised and wounded spirit revived under the soothing influence of affection; her stiff and angular traits, both of thought and action, became softened by Mabel's persuasive and winning grace, and gently and unconsciously she slid into that household niche for which nature had seemed to destine her. The light and irresponsible, though somewhat monotonous duties which she voluntarily assumed, became her pastime and her pride; the respectful attention with which she

was invariably treated laid to rest every suspicion that she might be deemed an intruder; and the confidence with which she was received into family discussions and counsels, made her interests one with those of her young relatives.

Her dread of strangers seemed as great as ever, for Mabel could not but observe that the first allusion to Helen Gracie, as a neighbor and friend, caused her aunt to start and shrink with seeming annoyance and alarm, exclaiming at the same time, "Who is she? I never heard of her before." And when Mabel replied, "A dear little friend of ours, daughter of our minister," Sabiah turned away rather shortly, as if (at least, so Mabel interpreted the movement,) ministers and their daughters were among the inevitable trials of earth. It was surprising, therefore, what a cordial and tender friendship eventually sprang up between the faded spinster and this sweet fragile flower of the prairie. At first Sabiah only watched her with an observant, critical eye; then, after a few interviews, spoke to her with a more than common interest, and Mabel smiled to see how frequently she would lay her hand on the fair girl's head with a degree of tenderness which she was not wont to manifest. Finally, no one could tell how or why, it became an established custom and a well-confirmed understanding, that the seat next to Aunt Sabiah, whether at the table or the fireside, was sacred to Helen whenever she chose to occupy it; and it was an equally acknowledged fact, that no one, not even Mabel herself, held a more certain place in her shrunken and exclusive heart, than the minister's lovely and loving child.

With the minister himself, however, Sabiah never seemed disposed to cultivate any acquaintance. Perhaps his conversation was too elevated to please her taste; for he was such a philosopher, scholar, and naturalist, that he frequently soared into the regions of scholastic lore, and it might be that such "high talk," as Sabiah used in old times to stigmatize conversation of this class, wearied her; for she never engaged with Mr. Gracie in conversation upon any topic, often left the parlor when he was seen approaching, and sometimes, when every one

else thought him uncommonly interesting, she would quietly slip out of the room and go to bed.

These very circumstances, however, were a manifestation of that independence which, in her present simple and unartificial life, Sabiah now enjoyed, and in all things it was easy to perceive that at last the solitary woman had found the sanctuary which her spirit craved, and was an honored, respected member of a happy home.

And in this home Mabel continued to be as she had been from the beginning — the presiding genius. She walked, talked, studied, and played with the boys, encouraging them by her example, inciting them by her earnestness, cheering them by her mirth, and governing them by her love.

And if she sometimes felt half impatient with the tedious and self-imposed tasks which their education involved, and sighed with weariness as she bent her head over the difficult translation or intricate problem which she must herself master before she could play the part of instructress to her nephews, she was more than recompensed for the effort when she noticed the respect which they involuntarily paid to her superior knowledge. Nor was the advantage which she thus acquired confined to a single occasion. It served to confirm her general influence, and strengthen her power to guide and direct their minds; for no boy is less susceptible to the loving sway of woman because his intellect, as well as his heart, pays her homage.

With her own and Harry's friends at Lake Farm she was in constant correspondence; and though, as yet, there had been no opportunity for an often-projected exchange of visits, she was daily brought into close proximity with their minds and thoughts. Madam Percival seemed ever to have her happiness and improvement at heart. Books, pamphlets, and newspapers were forwarded to her almost weekly, and during a period of more than a year, which was passed by the good lady herself in New York, there was no deficiency in the supply. While thus receiving continual proof of the thoughtfulness of her brother's friend, she was also, by the selection of authors,

the marked passages, and the notes pencilled in a manly hand, brought into familiar intercourse with the vigorous, cultivated, and original intellect, the generous, expansive, and philanthropic heart of Percival. Nor was it by these means only that she learned to set an exalted estimate upon the character of this noble-spirited, enterprising, and truly gifted man. The voice of public opinion, as likewise Harry's confirming testimony, soon marked him as one destined to do honor to his country and the world. Though his flourishing estate, which he had himself redeemed from the wilderness, was the place dearest to his affections, it was not here alone, or principally, that his duties centred, for he had been trained to the profession of the law; and while all his leisure time was devoted to agricultural pursuits, the large and rapidly increasing city, at some ten miles' distance, was the scene of his legal labors. Here it was his exalted province, and one which he strove to prove worthy of man's highest powers,—not to foster differences, but to allay them; not to embitter the heart, but to reconcile human disagreements and rights;—at once seeking to promote peace on earth and good will to men, and redeeming one of the noblest professions from the discredit which has been heaped upon it by false, designing, and self-seeking slaves of sin, unworthy to style themselves servants of the law. Nor holding, as he did, to the highest standard of truth and right, and bringing to the cause the most shining abilities, could his talents long continue obscure, or his name unknown. He was acknowledged far and wide as the man whom the people trusted, and though he had perseveringly declined all public office, his personal influence and sway were widely felt and exercised.

Had Mabel known no other interest in him than that which one earnest, truth-loving mind cherishes for another of the same scope and order, her enthusiasm would have been readily enkindled by the reports which reached her of his honorable and well-earned fame. As it was, she read his arguments with as intense a zeal as if the cause had been her own; studied his character through the various means which were open to her; sympathized in his principles, and, unconsciously to herself,

made him the model by which she strove to mould her nephews to the stature of honest and upright men.

Thus, dwelling in a neighborhood which presented but few of the refinements of life, associating constantly with boys just ripening into manhood, engaging with them in some of the sterner studies usually confined to their sex, and cultivating an intimate acquaintance with a mind accustomed to grapple with subjects of vital interest to society and the State, it might have been feared that Mabel's manners would lose something of their delicacy; that the sweet and feminine graces which constitute woman's highest charm, would give place to bustling activity, or misplaced enthusiasm, and that her tone of thought, if not her mode of expression, would become masculine and harsh.

But could Mabel have been so utterly false to her truer self, to that divine and saintly spirit, by the aid of which all her victories had hitherto been won, there was an influence ever at work to keep alive the tenderest emotions of her heart, and call into action all those gentle sympathies which soften, chasten, and subdue the soul.

For there was one shadow ever darkening on the hearth-stone, and reflecting itself in the heart and on the countenance of the young girl, who watched over her aged, care-worn, disappointed father, as if she had been the fostering parent and he a feeble child. And, as a mother's heart grows purer, stronger, holier, amid her anxieties, cares, and fears for her suffering infant, the soul of Mabel became more and more imbued with sweet, womanly tenderness, as she learned a new lesson of sacred love at the altar of filial duty.

Thus, as time passed on, and every succeeding year ripened and enlarged her mind, and her genial and sunny temper shed light and gladness on her earthly sphere, there was ever one sad and plaintive strain mingling in the harmony of her life, one subject of faith, and hope, and prayer, which kept her heart turned heavenward.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The heart's affection — secret thing!
Is like the cleft rock's ceaseless spring,
Which free and independent flows
Of summer rains or winter snows.
The fox-glove from its side may fall,
The heath-bloom fade, or moss flower white;
But still its runlet, bright though small,
Will issue sweetly to the light.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

Of Mabel Vaughan, the brilliant ball-room beauty, we have given no detailed description; merely hinting at the peculiar charms which characterized her, and leaving it to the reader's fancy to fill out the picture, since beauty is the same all the world over, subject only to differences of taste. Mabel Vaughan at twenty-five, however, merits a less brief introduction; for time, without robbing her of youthful bloom, has developed in her traits which are less universally recognized, which are felt rather than acknowledged, and which are but the outward sign and expression of an inward truth. The face, doubtless, is the same. The complexion has lost nothing of its fairness; the full brown eye glows with as soft a light; the smile which plays around the mouth is as spontaneous and attractive; and the chestnut hair, on which Cecilia had been proud to lavish all her skill, is as rich and glossy as ever, though far less elaborately arranged. But the face is the mirror of the soul, and as such it unconsciously reveals the emotions that are passing within, and borrows from the chastened heart a serene and holy radiance, which illuminates every feature, like a halo on the brow of a saint. Thus, the light which now beams from her eye is not excited by gratified vanity, nor by flattering tongues, but by the quick fire of earnest purpose and of ardent truth the smile

upon her countenance springs not from the mere effervescence of girlish spirits, but from unfailing cheerfulness and sympathy with others' joy; the serene peace which enfolds her like a mantle, has not its source in the promise of pleasure, or luxurious ease, but in calm, confiding trust, and in the reflection of each day's duty done.

It is a balmy summer's evening, and, with her head resting on her hand, she sits on the door-step of her father's house, looking out upon the wide prairie, on which the moonlight falls in an unbroken sheet of silver light, giving to the long grass, as it waves to and fro in the gentle breeze, a strange likeness to the rolling swell of ocean. The prospect is vast, grand, and unbroken; the hour is a quiet one, and Mabel is lost in meditation,— not in a meditation proportioned to the sublimity of the scene, though she now and then gazes into the dim distance, with reverential awe, but in simple, loving thoughts, concerning her home and its various members — wondering where the boys can be, for they went fishing early in the afternoon, and whether her father may not be spending the evening with Mr. Gracie, and if it is not probable that her aunt, in the inner room, has fallen asleep in her chair, and what can have become of Harry, who is at home for a day, but has been out of sight for some hours. The latter subject of self-inquiry is presently set at rest, as, looking in the direction of the grove by the river bank, she sees him approaching, and some one with him. "Yes — no — yes, to be sure, it is Helen." But she does not wonder at that; they are walking slowly and talking confidentially, too — but neither does she wonder at that. She does wonder, however, as, on drawing near the house, Harry leaves his companion and goes off to speak with farmer James, while Helen, seeing her on the door-step, springs towards her, throws her arms around her neck, hides her cheek against hers, and sobs like a child.

"Why Helen, dear Helen," cries Mabel, in alarm, "what is the matter? Have you and Harry had a quarrel?"

"No. Oh, no, we never had a quarrel in our lives," exclaims

Helen. "Dear Mabel, how I love you. I never knew until now, how much reason I had to love you!"

"What! for Harry's sake?"

"Yes, and for mine, and for everybody's that loves him, and is proud of him; he has been telling me," said she, lowering her voice to the softest whisper, "what he never told me before, — how he struggled and fell, and never could have risen again but for you; how you followed him and prayed for him, and loved him, and saved him."

Helen's tones were broken, as she uttered these few words. Mabel tried to speak, but her voice also failed her, and, for a few moments, the two girls mingled their tears.

Helen was the first to recover herself. "Think how noble he has been, Mabel!" exclaimed she. "He never asked me to be his wife before. I do not believe he would have now, if — if —"

"I know," exclaimed Mabel, with a soothing tenderness of tone; "dear child, I know!"

"Papa spoke in his hearing, this afternoon, of leaving me all alone in the world," said Helen, "and I could not bear to hear him talk so; and Harry could not bear it, — and so it gave him courage to say to me to-night what he never dared say before. Oh, the coward, to think I would not trust him!"

"Poor fellow, he has undergone a long probation," said Mabel.

"Five whole years," said Helen. "Think of it! It has been so different for me; I knew all the time that he loved me, and I had so much to do for father and the people, and we have all been so happy together, hearing from Harry, and enjoying his little visits, and the time has seemed so short; and I never looked forward to the future — but he, living all alone, serving out an apprenticeship to his conscience, with nobody to cheer him, and all the while dwelling on the past, and doubtful for the future — O Mabel, he has proved himself a hero!"

"You do not love him any the less then, Helen, for his confessions?"

"No, indeed! but far, far better; he has gained a victory

over himself, and is greater in my eyes than if he were the conqueror of nations."

"He has his reward," said Mabel; "he will be able to boast of the best little wife in the world, and I of the dearest of sisters," and she kissed her affectionately.

"We ought to love one another, all of us," said Helen, with deep feeling, as she returned Mabel's embrace, "and the more so, because we do not know how soon it may be God's will to part us. Oh, how our best blessings and bitterest sorrows are mingled together in this world. My dear, dear papa! I must go home to him now;" and, as Harry made his appearance round the corner of the house, she bade Mabel good night, joined him, and, putting her arm confidingly in his, walked away in the direction of the parsonage.

Mabel was still sitting on the steps when Harry returned, although he had been gone an hour, for he staid to receive an old man's blessing and the free gift of his only child. It was now his turn to claim her loving sympathy. "Mabel," said he, as he took a seat beside her, and put his arm around her waist, "have I done wrong?"

"Wrong in waiting so long, Harry, and enduring so much unnecessary suspense?"

"No, in claiming Helen at last. What right have I to such a blessing?"

"The right of a man who has proved himself worthy of it."

"But, ought I thus to take advantage of Helen's guileless, simple-hearted nature? Would a less unworldly woman confide in me as she does, knowing all?"

"A less unworldly woman could not appreciate your self-conquest, Harry; it is only the humble, Christian heart which can sympathize with human weakness, and rightly estimate human victories. I should not think Helen worthy of you, if she undervalued the firm and noble effort by which you have overcome evil with good. It is because she knows how to prize the hero of such a hard-fought battle, that I feel sure she can be trusted with the future happiness of my brother."

"There are few who have such encouragements for effort, and such motives for perseverance as I have had," said Harry. "Helen's love may be my reward, but it is yours, Mabel, which has saved me. God bless you for it! There would be more such victories among men, if there were more such sisters as mine in the world."

The failure in the health of the village pastor, and the prophetic warning of his approaching death, which had brought about the mutual acknowledgment of a five years attachment between his daughter and Harry, were followed by still more alarming signs of physical prostration, and it soon became evident that this faithful servant of God must soon be called from the sphere of his earthly usefulness. He had for many weeks ceased to officiate in his church—a neat edifice recently erected by his now prosperous congregation—and though his interest in the people of his affections was undiminished, his labors among them were at an end, and his duties were about to be assumed by another. This immediate choice of a successor had been made at Mr. Gracie's urgent request, as it was his wish, before his departure, to see one fitted for the sacred office installed in his place; and, although now reduced to excessive feebleness, he listened with eager attention as, from Sabbath to Sabbath, he was cheered with accounts of the success with which the new laborer wrought in the vineyard of his planting.

"I have left papa alone," said Helen, one Sunday afternoon at midsummer, as she presented herself at Mr. Vaughan's door, "but he insisted upon it; he is so anxious I should hear the continuation of this morning's discourse. Come Mabel! Alick, you are going too, I hope; your memories are better than mine, and papa will depend upon a full report of the sermon."

Mabel and both the boys at once rose to accompany her; Mr. Vaughan took his hat and cane, and, in an absent way, offered Helen his arm—he was such a gentleman still in spite of cares and years; but Sabiah, contrary to custom,—for she was usually a regular attendant at church,—expressed no wish to go, even resisted a little persuasion, and was left at home alone.

She sat listening until the last sound of the church bell had died away into silence, then rose, went to the door, and watched until the last straggler had entered the church, which was just within sight; and finally, when all was still, calm, and peaceful, put on her black bonnet, took her old-fashioned parasol, and prepared for a walk. First, however, she crept quietly into the milk cellar, lifted from under a cover a little cottage cheese, which her own hands had made the day before, and covering it with a snowy napkin, carried it carefully in her hand. To whom could she be going? and for whom could the choice and delicate preparation be intended?

It was one of those rare summer days when all nature seems wrapt in the luxury of repose. There was scarcely a breath stirring in the air, the wild flowers scarcely bent on their slender stalks, the grass could not be seen to wave. The birds in the thicket by the river had forgotten to sing; even the hum of the insects under foot seemed an almost unconscious murmur. All around was quiet and beautiful, wrapt in the holy hush of a summer Sabbath; why, then, was there such a restless beating, such an impatient flutter, in the heart of the lonely woman, who, with an unequal step, was pursuing the narrow path across the village green? Perhaps she was thinking of such Sabbath days, long, long ago, — of such pleasant strolls across a village green, when she was not alone; perhaps, as she carefully handled the plate which held the little cheese, she was reminded of some loved friend who had been wont, in times long past, to esteem this work of her hands a luxury; or perhaps she was recalling the words with which beloved lips had been heard to praise her skill. Whatever might be the thought, it was one so all-engrossing, that she heeded not the heat of the burning sun beating down upon her head, and was unaware of the trembling of her aged limbs, until at length she stood hesitating in the shade of a blooming locust tree in front of the minister's dwelling.

The open door led directly into the principal room of the house, a cheerful, pleasant apartment, at once the study of the

father, the sitting-room of his child, and the favorite resort of the young and old of his parish.

Now, for the first time, however, Sabiah stood upon its threshold, and looking in, beheld the form of the feeble invalid, wrapped in a calico dressing-gown, and seated in an arm-chair, his head carefully propped up by pillows. His back was towards her, his eye fixed upon the window opposite which he sat, and his thoughts soaring into those blue heavens, at which he gazed through a net-work of woodbine and fragrant roses now in full bloom. Beside him lay a number of holy books, and a volume of sacred hymns was open on his knee.

Sabiah knew not how long she had stood silently within the room, when the rustling of her dress, the reflection of her shadow, the sigh which escaped her, or, possibly, only the instinctive consciousness of human presence, caused the invalid to turn his head slowly round, and their eyes met. A look of sweet benignity overspread the pale face; he held out his thin, transparent hand; she laid her burden gently on the table, and, coming forward, took the offered hand in her own withered palm, murmuring, "Reuben!"

"Sabiah!" said the aged man with a glance of touching tenderness, "this is kind."

Not another word was spoken, — but he lifted the pile of books from the chair close beside him, and Sabiah, comprehending the action, sat down, with her hand still locked in his.

"I have been thinking all day," said he, at last breaking the expressive silence, "of a Sabbath like this, many years ago when we both were young. Do you remember that July afternoon when you wore the bonnet trimmed with blue, and we sat together in the choir, and the last tune sung was 'Arlington.'? We walked home, I know, through the meadows, and sat down under the walnut tree, and spoke but little, and yet were very happy; we loved one another then, Sabiah."

"We did, Reuben."

"It seemed good in the sight of God that our earthly paths should lie widely apart; it has seemed good to Him, also, that

we who rejoiced in each other's affection in the morning of our days, should clasp hands once more in friendship at life's solemn close. How precious the thought, that there shall dawn for us both a brighter morning, when those who have truly loved one another shall be once more united where there are no more partings."

"Life is a hard journey, Reuben," said Sabiah; then added with a half-complaining sigh, "I trust it leads to rest."

"It is hard, my dear friend," said the good clergyman, bestowing on her a look of half-anxious, half-pitying interest, "but the soul's true rest may yet begin below. Our painful discipline is lost upon us, unless it teaches meek submission to God's will; but a patient confidence in His love is rest, and joy, and peace to the burdened soul."

"You have found that rest, Reuben?"

"I have, Sabiah, but only through the struggle of a bitter and early disappointment; without the trial, comes not victory, nor without the cross, the crown. Once found, however, it is an all-sufficient balm, and let every other consolation perish, that precious love will atone."

"I will seek it," said Sabiah.

"Do so," exclaimed the old man, "and I pray God," he added fervently, "that His peace may descend upon you like the heavenly dew."

There was another long pause, like the first; then Sabiah made a movement to rise.

"Must you go?" said the sick man quietly. "It is very sweet and pleasant to feel that you are here beside me. I even forget to speak, my mind is so busy with the past."

Sabiah, even more hesitating and irresolute than usual, sank back into her seat.

"Time has laid his hand on both our heads, Sabiah," said the old man, "but the heart is true to its tender memories. I have loved and lost a good and faithful wife since our youthful days; but now, in the evening of my life, the thought of her has been strangely mingled with the memory of an earlier love. A few days more, and one of us shall depart and be no more seen; but true affection is not a thing of time, and I

cannot but hope this renewal of sacred ties may be sanctified to us both. God bless you, Sabiah! You were very kind to come."

"I am very glad I came, Reuben," said Sabiah; "I felt I must see you once more."

"Farewell, dear friend," said he, for she had again risen to go, "we shall meet again beyond yonder blue vault of heaven." He pressed her withered hand to his thin, sunken lips, — they exchanged one more farewell — and she passed slowly out of the house.

Turning in his arm chair, he watched her retreating figure as she re-crossed the green, then looked upward, and breathed a silent prayer. She entered the door of her home, wiped a tear from each dim eye, and sat down in her accustomed seat.

The romance of her life was over, but not so its mighty influence. Thenceforth her heart, already softened towards humanity, was subdued towards God, and from the solitary rock in the desert there gushed forth a fountain of calm, religious joy.

All around her felt it, but none knew the source of this well-spring of heavenly peace, for the ancient lovers passed away, and no one shared their secret.

Not until Helen came to bring back the plate and napkin, was Sabiah reminded of the cottage cheese which, without a word of explanation, she had left on the pastor's table.

"Papa enjoyed your cheese so much, Aunt Sabiah," said the unconscious girl; "it is the only thing he has relished for a week past."

Mabel lifted her large, brown eyes inquiringly to her aunt, but Sabiah made no reply, and the circumstance was forgotten, save that the thought passed through the mind of Mabel, "how illness excites one's sympathy, — even Aunt Sabiah, it seems, has done her part in ministering to dear Mr. Gracie, whom she always used to avoid in his healthier days."

A few weeks more, and the good pastor was laid in the village church-yard; and, shortly after, a weeping-willow was planted above his grave; but it was never suspected whose trembling hands had placed it there.

CHAPTER XXXV

Ay, years had passed,
Severing our paths, brave friend, and thus we meet at last.
MRS. HEMANS.

ONE bright morning in September, a few months after the events related in the last chapter, a modest equipage might be seen stationed at Mr. Vaughan's door, awaiting a youthful party who were about to start on a short pleasure excursion. The first shock of bereavement being past, the orphaned Helen had not refused to admit Harry's claim to constitute himself henceforth her protector by the holiest ties; and about a week previously she had exchanged the sympathy and hospitality of Mr. Vaughan's roof for a permanent and honored place in the home and heart of Harry. The neat dwelling-house which the prosperous young farmer had recently built, and furnished with tasteful simplicity for the reception of his bride, had never yet been seen by any of his own family, and it was, therefore, with no ordinary interest and excitement, that Mabel, Alick, and Murray had projected a visit to the newly wedded pair.

The weather being lovely, but the road in some places heavy and rough, a light, open wagon had been procured, as the most desirable vehicle for a thirty miles drive, and old Sorrel, a strongly-built animal belonging to Mr. Vaughan, was expected to perform the labor of the journey. Murray, a handsome, animated boy of thirteen, stood outside the door, cracking his long whip-lash and his dry jokes, while Alick, two years older, and nearly grown to man's stature, was patiently stowing away numerous packages under the seats and on the floor of the wagon.

"Aunt Mabel, are you thinking of establishing an express line?" cried Murray, "you seem to be testing the capacity of this wagon to the utmost."

Mabel laughed. "Those are articles of Helen's property, left in my care," said she; "handle that gently, Alick, it is her mother's picture. Oh, there is the luncheon basket! — we must not forget that!"

"No, nor old Sorrel's dinner," cried Murray, snatching up a little bag of oats which lay on the ground.

"Here is the box of papers and books," exclaimed Sabiah, anxiously, as she stood looking on from the doorway; "you are leaving no room for that, and it is the most important of all."

"That is true," responded Mabel; "Helen would be disappointed enough, if her father's letters and sermons were left behind. What shall we do with that box, Alick?"

Poor Alick glanced at it with a blank expression of countenance; but he was not one easily to be discouraged, and lifting it to the back of the wagon, he tried it one way, then turned it round and tried it the other way, but the vacant space would not accommodate it.

"It 's no use, Al!" exclaimed Murray; "you 'll have to take out the back seat; it is the only way."

Alick hesitated.

"Never mind," cried Murray, who, when Alick's patient expedients failed, was always good-naturedly ready to accommodate even at a personal sacrifice; "out with the old bench! now, you and Aunt Mabel sit in front and I'll ride on the box — the favorite seat always for sporting characters." And, suiting the action to the word he vigorously exerted himself in the proposed arrangement, threw a buffalo robe over the rough packing-case, and sprung upon it, with his back to the horse and his feet dangling behind. "It 's pretty much like an English dog-cart, after all, is n't it, grandfather?" continued he, as the spare form of old Mr. Vaughan appeared on the door-step, "only a thousand times more jolly!"

The old gentleman, whose face had worn a most mournful gravity, at what appeared to him the degrading dilemma to which the party were reduced, could not resist a faint smile, as he seldom could when challenged to it by this merry-andrew

of the family ; and, descending one step more, he handed Mabel to her seat.

Alick gathered up the reins. "Now give him the road, Al!" cried Murray, flinging back his head and speaking over his shoulder. "I saw that the old fellow had four quarts extra last night, and this morning, too — hurrah!" and, as they left the village behind them, and passed through the adjacent farms, he waved his hand to the sturdy husbandmen, whom they met by the way-side, with a mingled joyousness and civility, which drew smiles from many an honest face.

For some miles their road led directly along the bank of the river, which was glowing brightly in the morning sunshine ; then, branching to the left, it stretched across the rolling prairie and through the rich grain-fields, now ripening for the harvest ; and anon, a heavy oak thicket refreshed them with its shade. Towards noon, they again halted by the river bank, when the boys released the horse from the wagon, removed his bridle, and placed before him his provender. Mabel, meanwhile, converted the packing-case to a new use, by spreading a napkin over it, and making it answer the purpose of a table, from which she and her nephews enjoyed an excellent luncheon.

Then, after refreshing themselves and old Sorrel with a draught of cool water from the river, they proceeded on their way. It still wanted some hours of sun-set, when they came within sight of Harry's new residence, which Alick and Murray recognized even more readily than Mabel, as occasional visits to their uncle, in times past, had made them familiar with the situation and out-buildings, while she had been there once only, and that some three years before.

We pass over the cordial greeting which they received on their arrival, the delight they expressed at the evidences of comfort and taste which met them on every hand, and the cheerful evening which they passed around the fireside, when, as the night proved chilly, a bright blaze was kindled, and the young couple had, literally, their first house-warming. It would be equally in vain to attempt to follow them through the succeeding day, when the boys accompanied Harry for miles about

his farm, took an inventory of his promised crops, examined his fat cattle, and drove a pair of newly-broken colts, while Mabel, beside bestowing her time and praise upon all these objects, had a thousand and one subjects of in-door interest to which Helen was eager to call her attention.

"You ought to stay with us a week, a month, a year, Mabel, before we should be satisfied," exclaimed Harry, on the second evening of their visit, as he drew her to a seat beside him. "But, since you must go home to-morrow, there is one thing which reconciles me to it: my friend Percival is to speak in your town hall to-morrow night, on some of the great political subjects that are being agitated at present, and I ventured to extend the family hospitalities to him. I felt sure you would be glad to give him a welcome."

"Glad! we shall be delighted," exclaimed Mabel; "I shall, and so will father, I have no doubt. Boys, do you hear that? Mr. Percival is to give us a political address to-morrow night. I say 'us,' Harry," added she, with an arch smile. "I hope ladies are not excluded."

"No, indeed; you must go by all means, May. I would not have you lose such an opportunity on any account. He is the most eloquent man I ever heard speak, and he is bringing his whole power into the field, for his heart is in the work he has undertaken. If father should not feel able to attend the lecture, the civilities of the house will devolve on you, Alick. Judging from your face, you will not think the occasion an unworthy one for their exercise."

Alick's countenance was indeed full of enthusiasm at the prospect of seeing and hearing this gifted stranger, and Murray's scarcely less so; for while the elder lad aspired eagerly to an intercourse with a man famed for high moral and intellectual attainments, the mind of the younger was equally well stored with facts illustrative of his taste for manly exercises, and his skill in all those physical exploits which captivate the mind of an adventurous boy.

"It was a mere accident which prevented you from seeing Percival, Mabel, when you were here three years ago," said

Harry, "and both seasons since, he would gladly have accompanied me on a visit to my father's, but I could not leave home at the time agreed upon. Now, however, he is sure to be there, for he never fails to keep an appointment; and, lest the duties of hostess should devolve after all upon poor Aunt Sabiah, Helen and I will speed the parting guests with an early breakfast to-morrow; eh, Helen?"

Helen consented to this disinterested act of hospitality on condition of a long visit from Mabel a few weeks later, and a partial promise to that effect having been obtained, the hour for departure was fixed upon, and shortly after sunrise the travellers were on their homeward road.

Old Sorrel, however, did not, like the rest of the party, appreciate the importance of the occasion, and had no sympathy with their desire to make a quick passage. The creature did not even seem, like most animals of his class, to comprehend the fact that his face was turned towards home; for Sorrel's earlier and happier days had been passed among a drove of wild horses which enjoyed all the freedom of the open prairie; and, although now for many years reduced to servitude, he had imbibed few of the instincts of civilized life, and his temper was surly and pertinacious in the extreme. He had rewarded Murray's care by travelling with unusual promptness, on the upward trip, but no coaxing could induce him to repeat the experiment, and at mid-day the travellers had not yet reached their previous halting place, which marked somewhat less than half the journey. It was, therefore, towards the middle of the afternoon when they at length found themselves at a point where the road, leaving the river bank, took a direct line across a prairie some six miles in extent. For the last half hour, their winding course had led them through a belt of rich woodland, under whose refreshing shade, they had paused to rest their horse, and Mabel, meantime, removing her bonnet for the freer enjoyment of the breeze, while Murray crept down the river bank and made a collection of brilliant wild flowers, which, as they continued their drive, he busied himself, on his box behind, in wreathing into a tasteful garland. "Come,

old Sorrel," cried he, standing upright on the now empty box, and, as he spoke, placing the wreath, with an air of playful homage, on the uncovered head of Mabel, "here's a glorious race-course for you. Try now and do some credit to your mistress, while I crown her queen of the prairie."

He had scarcely uttered these words, accompanied as they were by a quick snapping of the whip on Alick's part, when a sudden jerk and wrenching of the vehicle threw him from his elevated position, prostrate to the ground, and a scene ensued which wholly altered the face of affairs, leaving old Sorrel master of the race-course indeed, and Mabel an enthroned, but utterly helpless queen.

The road, where it left the thicket, diverged into two travelled routes across the prairie, which, though pursuing the same general direction, were wholly distinct from one another, and Alick had purposly avoided that which they had chosen on their previous trip, on account of a wide gully that intersected it, and which recent rains had transformed into a slough of deep, black mud. This same gully stretched across the opposite road, but a bridge of logs had been thrown over it for the convenience of travellers. Unfortunately, however, the rain which had made the one almost impracticable, had rendered the other positively dangerous, by displacing one of the logs, and leaving a most insidious flaw in the rough and hastily-constructed bridge. With a stumble and a plunge, old Sorrel had escaped falling into this trap for the unwary, but the impetus given to the animal's speed both by Alick's stroke of the whip, and the disaster which immediately followed, proved fatal to the safety of the vehicle.

In a single moment of time, before the travellers had discovered their danger, the front wheels of the wagon were precipitated into the hollow between the logs, the shafts were instantaneously broken into shivers, and the frightened horse had succeeded in clearing himself from the traces and bounded off to a distance.

No one was injured, for Alick and Mabel had maintained their seats in spite of the shock, and Murray was unharmed by

his sudden fall; but their situation was ludicrous and provoking in the extreme. Before them lay the wide expanse of prairie, on which not a single object was discernible save the figure of their raw-boned steed, who, prancing and throwing up his heels in the distance, seemed to be taunting them with their misfortune and triumphing in the sense of freedom. Behind them was the little thicket from which they had just emerged, and they well knew that there was not a human habitation within a distance of several miles in either direction. But desperate as the case might seem in a practical point of view, its comic effect was irresistible; and, after exchanging with each other a single glance of dismay, the united trio broke into a simultaneous fit of laughter. Alick and Mabel presently controlled their sense of the ridiculous so far as to utter a few ejaculations of inquiry and regret, but Murray, as he stood first glancing at the pair who occupied in regal state the seat of the broken wagon, and then at the enfranchised horse who at a safe distance was performing an evolution around them, shook with a merriment so hearty and contagious, that it was impossible to take counsel in reference to their difficulties.

At this crisis a sound was heard proceeding from the adjacent thicket, which had the effect of composing the group into an attentive and listening attitude; and in the silence which now reigned among them, it was not difficult to recognize a human voice breaking on the air in most harmonious song,—a song so deep, full, and clear that its music seemed to make the wild prairie ring.

All strained their ears to catch the welcome notes, and as they came nearer and nearer, Mabel's face flushed with excitement and expectancy. She had heard the voice, the words, the glorious harmony but once before, and yet, though years had passed over her since, and it seemed a marvel too great to be fully realized, she knew that she could not be mistaken in their source.

A moment more, and a figure on horseback emerged from the wood, and as he caught sight of his unexpected audience, ceased singing and came forward, looking about him as if

striving to comprehend the scene. He was a young and powerfully-built man, dressed in a simple hunting-suit; and the rifle which was slung over his shoulder, and the string of prairie-fowl suspended from his horse's neck, proclaimed him to have been shooting successfully in the vicinity. He was a traveller, moreover, as might be conjectured from the saddle-bags and heavy surveyor's blanket strapped to his saddle, and travelling quite at his leisure, too, if one might judge from the pace at which he rode. Nor was it strange that the natural burst of song died upon his lips, and his face indicated inquiry and surprise at the novel and picturesque scene which presented itself before him. Two youths, one a boy, the other a mere stripling, stood beside the broken vehicle (for Alick had by this time alighted), and alone in her elevated position, in the midst of an unbroken prairie, sat a young and beautiful girl, unconsciously crowned with the brilliant wreath which Murray had placed on her head at the moment of the accident, while, at some distance, the sorrel steed, with a portion of his harness sweeping the ground, was triumphantly curvetting in forgetfulness of his years. The ludicrous nature of the occasion would have provoked the most stoical nature to a smile, and such was the effect of a first glance at the little group, upon the face of the new-comer. As he drew nearer, however, and surveyed the party more attentively, other and less easily defined emotions were depicted on the young man's countenance, and Mabel's face was suffused with the deep and conscious blush of the mutual recognition. For they were, and yet they were not, strangers. They had met before, and then, as now, he had come to her rescue, though in a far different cause. It was six years and more since, in Mr. Bloodgood's dwelling, on the night of Harry's disgrace, she had first beheld that manly form and those noble features; and now, after this lapse of time and under the most opposite circumstances, they had met again in the solitude of a Western prairie.

The embarrassment which ensued, however, was but momentary, for Bayard was a man of action; and before a second glance could be exchanged between them, he had read with his

quick eye the exact condition of affairs, and, without drawing near enough to ask or obtain a syllable of explanation, he had darted off in pursuit of the runaway steed. The task which he had thus promptly undertaken was no easy one; to an unpractised rider it would have been next to impossible, for time and habit have no power to efface from the once wild horse of the prairie the recollection of his ancient freedom, and the sudden recovery of it seemed at once to have restored old Sorrel to his juvenile strength and fleetness.

But Sorrel, even in his best days, had never been a match for the superior animal on which Bayard was mounted; and this fact, combined with a degree of dexterity which the young man had acquired from experience, gave him an advantage over the runaway which resulted in his speedy capture. Mabel and the boys looked on with intense and eager interest, while now describing a rapid circle, and now darting in an unforeseen direction, the accomplished horseman, partly by speed and partly by skilful manœuvre, gained the advantage of the deserter, and, after a few moments' hot pursuit, grasped him by the bridle and came bounding over the prairie with his unwilling captive. Mabel, who had stood upright in the wagon during the excitement of the chase, now gave her hand to Alick and sprang to the ground, just in time to greet with a smile of acknowledgment and thanks the victor in the animated chase, who rode up, laughing himself at the nature and success of his exploit; and springing lightly from the saddle, put the bridle of old Sorrel into the hand of the admiring Murray, and, with one arm passed through that of his own horse, lifted his hat and bowed respectfully and gracefully to Mabel, saying — "You have met with a serious accident and delay, Miss Vaughan, but I hope you have none of you suffered any personal injury."

"None at all, thank you," replied Mabel; while the boys looked their astonishment at hearing her name so confidently spoken by the stranger. "You have paid the heaviest penalty for our mishap, in the exertion you have so kindly made. We were truly fortunate in having a friend at hand."

She spoke the simple word *friend* with an accent which expressed how deeply and gratefully she felt its force; perhaps he understood that it had reference to the past as well as the present, for he replied in a tone equally impressive in its sincerity, "Nothing can make me happier than to be of service to you;" and then, as Murray eagerly commenced relating the circumstances of the accident, he proceeded to an examination of the disabled vehicle, which, with the boys' assistance, he easily raised from the hollow into which it had sunk.

Its shattered condition, however, proved to be such as to wholly unfit it for use, and the possibility of removing it across the prairie was even doubtful. Some of the principal bolts had given way, and the springs were also broken; but Alick volunteered to supply the place of the former by strong wooden pegs, while Bayard, placing his saddle-bags and blanket on the floor of the wagon, employed the straps by which they had been fastened in binding up the splintered shafts; after which, old Sorrel was once more harnessed to the wreck, and it was found that by carefully leading the horse over the level road, the decrepit equipage could be safely transported.

"The frail nature of our repairs, Miss Vaughan, and the broken springs, render it impossible to occupy the wagon," said Bayard, approaching Mabel, who stood a little apart, "but if you will do me the honor to make use of my horse, we can render the saddle comfortable for you with the help of this blanket;" and, as he spoke, he unfolded the rich and ample mantle of deep blue cloth and commenced laying it in heavy masses over the back of the animal, which stood arching its glossy neck, as if it, as well as its master, were proud of the proposed honor.

Mabel earnestly deprecated the arrangement; begged that he would not suffer them to interfere further with his journey, and insisted that she could walk, in company with her nephews; but Bayard, having assured himself that her refusal did not proceed from any fear of his high-spirited horse, answered all her objections with the simple assurance that he was not in haste; that a walk of ten miles, which was the distance to the

village, their common destination, was a trifle to one of his pedestrian habits; and the boys having united their persuasions to his, she blushingly and gratefully suffered herself to be assisted to the saddle.

"Have you seen my bonnet, Alick?" said she, as they were about to start. He handed it to her from the wagon, and as she prepared to put it on she became, for the first time, conscious that the garland, which she had noticed when Murray commenced weaving it in the wood, rested on her brow.

"Murray, you rogue!" exclaimed she accusingly, as she snatched it from her head, and flung it with such precision that it rested on the crown of his hat.

All burst into an involuntary laugh, in which Mabel could not resist joining, though glad to hide beneath her bonnet the face which became crimson as she reflected on the singular and ludicrous inconsistency which Bayard must have detected between her crowned head and the awkward dilemma in which he had discovered their party. She little knew that she had never, in all her life, looked so radiantly lovely as when he first caught sight of her, with the drooping scarlet blossoms contrasting with the pure whiteness of her noble brow, and mingling with the smooth folds of chestnut hair, to which the sun imparted that golden tinge at once so rare and so beautiful.

There is nothing which more effectually relieves embarassment than the presence of children; and whatever constraint might have been occasioned by the peculiar reminiscences subsisting between Bayard and Mabel was at once subdued by the mediatory influence of the two lads, who, excited by their recent adventure, were unusually loquacious and animated. Even Alick, though looking up with enthusiastic admiration at the stranger, whose attention to Mabel was alone sufficient to insure his grateful regard, shook off, to a great degree, the modest reserve which characterized him, and won, in his turn, the friendly interest of the young man, who never undervalued the ingenuous and original, though immature, intellect of boyhood.

Thus, with Bayard and Alick walking on either side of the horse which Mabel rode, and Murray a little in the rear, per-

forming the self-appointed office of leading old Sorrel, and interlarding the others' conversation with his drollery, they proceeded at the moderate, though regular pace suited to good pedestrians, with a ten miles' journey in prospect.

"At what hour is this caravan expected to arrive at its destination," cried Murray, when they had gone about a mile.

Mabel looked at her watch. "It is now five o'clock," said she, then added in a tone of regret, "I had no idea it was so late."

"I thought of Uncle Harry," said Alick, "at the moment of the crash. I believe, when he hears of this delay and disappointment, he will complain of the broken bridge more bitterly than any of us."

"More haste, worse speed," said Murray. "It was that last cut of the whip, Al, which settled the business so thoroughly for us."

"The boys were urging our old horse to the top of his speed at the moment of the accident," said Mabel to Bayard, by way of explaining this little dialogue. "We already felt ourselves somewhat belated, being anxious to reach home in good season, on account of a lecture that is to be delivered in our village this evening, which we are all anxious to attend."

"I think you will yet have an opportunity of doing so," said Bayard, glancing at his own watch; "it is now five. A lecture at this season would not commence before eight, or half past seven at the earliest. We ought, certainly, to be able to accomplish the remaining distance in two hours and a half."

"But Auntie is expected to play the part of hostess to the orator," said Murray. "If we meet with any further delay, I fear she will strike spurs to your horse and leave us."

Mabel smiled. "Your grandfather will be prompt in claiming the privilege of having Mr. Percival for his guest, Murray," said she. "I fear I can plead only selfish motives for being in haste. This gentleman is a stranger to us," added she, turning to Bayard, "but one for whom we have reason

to feel the most grateful esteem, and we anticipate the highest pleasure from his oratory."

"We shall do but little credit to our physical training if we are so late as to deprive you of the opportunity of hearing him," said Bayard. "I have less fear of that than of your being disappointed in the orator, whose abilities you, perhaps, estimate too highly."

"I think not," said Mabel confidently. "If we are in season, and we have not caused you too much fatigue, I hope you will share our enjoyment by being present at the address."

Bayard bowed, and a moment after gave a new turn to the conversation.

It was nearly sunset when the party reached the extremity of the prairie; the road then followed the river bank, and as day was merging into night, and their path was, at intervals, overshadowed by foliage, the figures of the little group were gradually obscured in the twilight gloom, and their brisk and lively discourse, now and then relapsed into thoughtful silence. The church bell was ringing out clear and loud, when, at length, shortly after dark, they entered the outskirts of the now populous and thriving village.

"That bell must be for the lecture," said Alick; "it is a new acquisition to the church," continued he, addressing Bayard, "and the sexton loves to make it heard on all occasions," and the little party simultaneously quickened their pace.

"Here we are at last," cried Murray, as they came in sight of the familiar homestead. "Aunt Sabiah has put a light in the window, and is, no doubt, watching anxiously for our arrival."

Murray was right; — Aunt Sabiah was not only watching, but listening, and his merry voice and laugh brought her directly to the door.

"Will you not come in, Sir, and take some refreshment with us?" said Mabel to Bayard, as he assisted her from his horse.

He thanked her, but politely declined, — he had an appointment, and was expected elsewhere.

"I am greatly indebted to you," said Mabel, with feeling, at the same time frankly offering him her hand. "I do not know how to express my sense of your repeated kindness."

"Do not speak of it," said he, receiving her hand with the same unaffected cordiality with which it was offered; "it is I who am under a lasting obligation. You have made my journey across the prairie a delightful and a memorable one."

Alick, meanwhile, was industriously restoring the saddle-bags and blanket to their original places. "Keep those, if you please," said Bayard, as the youth was also about to suspend the fruits of his shooting excursion around the horse's neck; "if the poor fowls can be made serviceable for your grandfather's table, my conscience will acquit me of mere wanton destructiveness;" and, having shaken hands with Alick and Murray, and glanced up at the house, where Mabel now stood in the doorway, gaily relating their adventures to her aunt, he mounted his horse and rode off at full speed.

"Father has gone to the lecture already," said Mabel to the boys, when, having delivered their dilapidated equipage into the charge of James, they came bounding into the house; "but see, Aunt Sabiah has a tempting supper prepared for us."

"Let us make haste and devour it, then," cried Murray, throwing down his cap. "I am as hungry as a bear."

"Are n't you tired, Auntie?" inquired Alick."

"Not at all," was the answer. "I have had a charming ride."

"You 'll all feel the better for your supper, I should think," said Aunt Sabiah, as she poured out tea for them. "I never did see anything like you, though, — you, every one of you, look as fresh as roses. I believe you could travel from Dan to Beersheba and never feel tired."

"It would depend considerably upon the kind of company we had on the way, — would n't it, Aunt Mabel?" said Murray, somewhat mischievously.

Mabel colored slightly, but with an unhesitating and intelligent smile assented to Murray's remark.

"Auntie," said Alick, "that gentleman knew you; he called

you by name once or twice. How do you suppose that happened? Did you ever see him before?"

"Yes, I met him in company once, Alick, some years ago, when I was staying at Aunt Ridgway's, in L."

"Well, now, if that is n't a coincidence!" exclaimed Sabiah. "But," added she, with a sigh scarcely warranted by the occasion, "this is a strange world we live in; people are brought together one way and another, who never expected to meet again this side of the grave."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Men of thought! be up and stirring
Night and day;
Sow the seed, withdraw the curtain,
Clear the way!
Men of action, aid and cheer them,
As ye may!
There's a midnight blackness changing
Into grey;
Men of thought and action,
Clear the way!"

The village in which Mr. Vaughan's homestead was located was fortunate in having been started (to use a familiar expression) by a number of intelligent and enterprising men, who had, through their praiseworthy exertions, given the place an established character and a prominence among the thriving towns of the country. Beside churches of three different denominations, it now boasted a neat school-house, an extensive flour-mill, and a handsome block of stores, the upper story of which constituted a convenient and capacious town-hall, which was first made use of for the purpose of public speaking on the night of Percival's address. This latter circumstance, together with the wide-spread popularity of the young orator, caused the occasion to be one of universal interest, and at an early hour the spacious room was thronged by an eager and attentive audience. A stout and honest trader, a supervisor of the of the town, occupied a seat on the platform at the left of that intended for the speaker; and in a similar place of honor on the right sat Mr. Vaughan, who, as the oldest citizen, the largest land-owner, and, above all, the perfect type of a grave, respectable gentleman, invariably received from his fellow-townsmen similar voluntary marks of distinction and deference.

The hour appointed for the address was just at hand. No orator had yet made his appearance, and a murmur of disappointment and inquiry was beginning to circulate through the crowd, when the tall and commanding form of Percival issued from its midst. With a perfectly calm, unruffled air he ascended the platform, shook hands with Mr. Vaughan and the supervisor, and looking round upon his audience with a smile of approbation, sat down and exchanged a few words with the gentlemen on either side of him. Then, observing that the hand of the clock pointed exactly the time agreed upon, he signified by a gesture his readiness to commence, and the sturdy trader, in fulfilment of his functions, rose and introduced him to the audience, who having in the meantime scanned his countenance and proportions, and, as American citizens are wont to do, established their individual opinions of his merits, greeted him with a unanimous and unqualified round of applause.

It was at this moment that Mabel and her nephews, somewhat heated and out of breath from their hasty meal and rapid walk, entered the gallery, which, although the entire assembly was freely interspersed with females, had been especially reserved for ladies.

"There 's Miss Vaughan and her boys," said a cousin of Melissa, wife to the innkeeper, addressing herself to two young girls whom Mabel was in the habit of instructing in the Sabbath School. "Move up, Elizy. Can 't you make a little room, Euphemy? I want to offer her this seat here in front. La, now! don't she look splendid? If the speaker could only catch sight of her, would n't he be inspired?" And standing up and gesticulating violently to Alick, she contrived to let him understand that his aunt could be accommodated beside her, to which place Mabel was with some difficulty piloted; and after thanking the obliging landlady and expressing a hope that she should not incommode any one, she seated herself, and as the din of applause subsided, her eye for the first time sought the platform.

Had the young man indeed depended on Mabel for his inspi-

ration, he could scarcely have bestowed on her a more earnest look than that which met her gaze, as at this moment he lifted his face and fixed his full blue eye upon her. As she encountered that expressive glance, her face, neck, and brow were suffused with crimson; and when next it was turned upon his audience, she listened with straining ear and breath suspended, as if the fate of nations hung upon his first word.

"Aunt Mabel," exclaimed Murray, in an eager, excited whisper, at the same time leaning forward from a seat behind her and striving to attract her attention, "It is, yes, it is our hunter — our prairie friend — our fellow-traveller!"

"Hush!" cried Alick, in an earnest, dissuasive tone; his quicker sensibilities revealing to him at a glance the emotions which were depicted in Mabel's countenance; "There is no need to tell her that; she sees, she knows."

There was indeed no mistaking the identity of the two individuals, for except that the wide-awake hat was laid aside and the hunting-suit exchanged for one of plain black cloth, the Percival who stood before them now, was the Bayard who had bade them farewell less than half an hour ago.

The silence that succeeded the first burst of enthusiastic welcome which had greeted the speaker was so intense and profound, that even the warning words of Alick sank to the faintest whisper, lest they might disturb the motionless expectancy which prevailed through the assembly, as Percival, in a clear and melodious voice, opened his address by a simple statement of the causes and motives for his presenting himself before them.

His calm but earnest manner, his language, at once plain, forcible, and marked by perfect truth, and, perhaps, more than all, his commanding presence, and an eye which seemed to address its appeal to each individual heart, had the effect of at once concentrating and riveting the attention of an audience composed, for the most part, of plain and unpretending, but intelligent and self-respecting men. Accustomed to the noisy rant and bombastic parade of professed caucus oratory, and manfully steeled against the wily sophistry and noisy partizan-

ship of the greedy aspirants after popular favor, they were all the more ready to give a willing and impartial hearing to one who, unshackled by the excitement of political ambition, made no appeal to their prejudices or their passions, but addressed himself, and recommended his cause, to that sound reason and enlightened conscience on which they prided themselves as free men and worthy citizens. Thus, as he stated his argument in plain, unvarnished terms, many a corroborating and assenting nod, on the part of the audience, proclaimed their conviction of its truth. As he announced the conclusion to which he himself had been led, a murmur of approbation seemed to intimate that each mind acknowledged him as its fit interpreter; and when, finally, with that pathos and eloquence which have their source in the deep emotions of a true and noble nature, he sought to rouse them, and bid them listen to the solemn call of duty, the heart of the multitude throbbed responsively, like the heart of one man.

No studied oratory, no hollow declamation, could thus have fired with generous warmth that rude, but candid and earnest assemblage. The secret of the speaker's power lay in his sincerity; — in the fact that the cause which he came to proclaim had stirred and roused his own spirit like a trumpet-call. He had hitherto voted at the polls, and expressed his political views, as a simple, conscientious discharge of manly duty; but, busy at home, and seeking nothing from abroad, he had wisely forborne to put himself forward as a gladiator in party strife. The case, however, was changed now. A great issue had arisen and a great crisis was at hand — an issue between injustice and oppression on one side, and the law of right and humanity on the other. The crisis involved a country's prosperity and a nation's honor. Therefore a true man (and such was Bayard Percival) could not remain a silent and inactive spectator, in a scene where he was nobly fitted to bear a part. He knew his power and felt his responsibility. His power was that of an honest man; his responsibility, that of a Christian. Had it been otherwise, he might have spoken to closed ears and failed to convince a single heart. But a character as free from wild

fanaticism on the one hand, as from cold conservatism on the other, had given him the people's confidence; while the purity of his motives and aims inspired him with a wisdom and a power which caused his words to be received as little less than oracles.

"Had one come among you," exclaimed he, "who, possessed of the spirit of misrule, prompted by one-sided and misdirected zeal, or excited by a blind enthusiasm, should bid you set at defiance every claim but that which he came to advocate, and rush into indiscriminate warfare with the enemy against whom all his passions were inflamed, I would simply charge you to beware, lest, while seeking by desperate and unsanctified means to promote the welfare of one brotherhood of men, you trampled under foot the rights, the property, and the lives of another, which should be to you equally dear and sacred.

"But, on the other hand, I would with equal fervor bid you beware of that sluggishness of the soul, that fatal indifference to truth and humanity, to which our very prosperity renders us prone, and would charge you as freemen, as citizens, and as Christians, to maintain inviolate the principles which you profess, and stand ever as sentinels on the watch-tower reared for the protection of civil liberty and the promotion of individual freedom. We may not at once extirpate the poison which has distilled itself into some portion of our body politic; but we can at least guard the members which are free from its subtle influence, and preserve pure and unsullied those fresh fountains of strength which are at length destined to infuse new health and vigor throughout the length and breadth of the Republic."

Then, changing his tone from that of earnest appeal to one of simple, descriptive power, he directed the thoughts and attention of his audience to that beautiful sister soil, then beginning to be the subject of national legislation, and painted, with all the warmth of the enthusiastic traveller, and all the simplicity and force of the practical husbandman, the beauty, the wealth, and the resources of that favored land. His countenance and words bore the impress of perfect truth, as, in

an unvarnished narrative of facts, he described the richness of her virgin soil, and the nature and extent of the productions it was capable of yielding. His eye glowed with the animation of the sportsman, and the inspiration of the poetic soul, as he dwelt on the grandeur of those primeval forests in which he had hunted, and roamed, and meditated, his broad chest seemed to expand and his form to rear itself to increased height, as he expatiated on the generations of noble men and women which such a land was capable of inspiring to high thoughts and generous deeds. And when, finally, having stirred the hearts of the assembly by his faithful representation of what this fair domain might, at no distant period, become, he commended her to their brotherly love, all were not only ready, but eager to extend the right hand of fellowship to their young and promising neighbor.

But there was another and darker side to the picture, and this he now hastened to set before them in all its sad deformity and gloom. He employed no fanatical abuse or tirade for the furtherance of his purpose, but with calm, prophetic warning, pointed to the blight already hovering in the air, the cloud already darkening in the distance and threatening to overshadow and destroy the fair harvest of men's hopes. "To what," asked he, "are you indebted for your own unexampled prosperity? is it not to the equality of human rights, the dignity which attends free and honest labor, the universal education of your children and the spread of Gospel truth? And shall any or all of these be denied to our sister territory? I charge you, as those who have a voice in this great decision, to answer the solemn question — shall that fatal institution be suffered to settle down upon the land, which dooms one race to slavery and dishonor and another to stagnation and decay? Shall that rich soil become the ground of the task-master,— those noble woods the retreat of the fugitive? Shall progress be checked, and the voice of truth be silenced, and man's better nature crushed? Forbid it, Heaven! Forbid it, ye who by word, by look, by honest vote, may command one breath of influence and bear a freeman's part in averting so fearful a catastrophe! Let it not be said

that the poison has penetrated to the seat of life, and that here, in the heart of our free and enlightened State, there are traitors to the cause of truth. Let us at least, a united and determined band, present our closed ranks against the inroads of perfidious counsels, and let the district which we serve be foremost in proclaiming that — Nebraska shall be free."

At this period in Percival's address, the audience, who had more than once expressed their enthusiasm by unqualified applause, rose simultaneously from their seats, and amid the waving of hands, hats and handkerchiefs, caught up and echoed by common consent his closing words — "Nebraska shall be free."

Great as was the clamor, however, it subsided almost instantly, as looking around him with unmoved countenance he continued in a calm, earnest tone. "I have not come hither my friends, so much to excite, as to convince you — not merely to rouse your generous patriotism, but to urge upon you now, and in view of similar contingencies, that fair, firm and consistent action by which alone you can lend your aid to the security and extension of the cause of freedom. It is because a crisis has arisen, to which the nation at large seems strangely indifferent, and because such occasions must from time to time occur so long as we are a people divided upon one great topic, that I have endeavored to awaken you to the importance of the event; for while I may speak and you may honor me by a hearing, responsibility and action belong to us all alike. As good men and true, let us see to it then that in our hearts and in our homes, in the every-day walks of life, and at the polls, we cherish and maintain those high and sacred principles which policy, reason, and an enlightened christianity, alike approve." Then, with the solemnity and fervor of one whose daily walk with God kept him ever mindful of the Sacred Presence, he commended the assembly to the guidance and direction of Him in whose hands all men are but as instruments, and the address was ended.

From the commencement of the lecture to the moment when applause was at its height, the impulsive and excitable disposition of Murray had exhibited itself in the animation of his

countenance, the eagerness of his gestures, and the vehemence of his cheers; Alick, in the meantime, remaining thoughtful, quiet and attentive, manifesting to those around him no other sign of emotion than that conveyed by the intense earnestness with which his eye was fixed upon the speaker. The most ardent sensibilities, however, are seldom those which appear on the surface, and the soul of the elder boy was none the less stirred, that it found no outward expression save in a single movement, which appealed to but one person present, and that perhaps the only one in the throng capable of appreciating his delicately organized and susceptible nature. At that crisis in the feelings of the assembly when with one accord they rose and joined in common acclamation, the youth might have been observed to leave his seat, a little in the rear of Mabel, and darting down the aisle which divided the gallery, ensconce himself on the lowest step directly beside his young aunt, who turned, met the earnest look which he fixed upon her face, responded to it with an answering smile, clasped his extended hand, and the boy feeling himself to be understood by the only being whose sympathy and approbation he craved, was satisfied and content; nor did he once again change his position or remove his eye from that of Percival until the close of the oration.

We may not probe the reflections which coursed through the mind of the boy, far less can we follow all the windings of that train of thought and emotion which partially revealed itself in the face of Mabel, as she, too, watched the expression of Percival's countenance, and drank in the inspiration of his words. For the first half-hour succeeding her entrance she was wholly engrossed by the tumultuous and agitating thoughts which attended her recognition of the speaker. Already, though known to her only by the report of his manly virtues, she had imaged him to herself as the impersonation of all that was truly noble, disinterested, and heroic; and now, in addition to every other claim which he possessed to her esteem, respect, and gratitude, he had suddenly proved to be identical with the man who, years before, in the hour of her bitter agony and humiliation, had won for himself a lasting place in her

memory and her prayers, and who once more, on this very day, had by his zealous efforts in her behalf confirmed her sense of deep and personal obligation. No wonder then, that from the moment when the harmonious tones of his voice fell upon her ear, confirming, as it were, the evidence of her other senses, she was for a while unconscious of the subject of his discourse, and realized only his individual presence.

She could not long, however, continue indifferent to the topic which evidently, for the time, engrossed all the powers of his master mind, and reacted proportionately upon his audience. Her kindling eye and cheek soon gave evidence of the intelligence with which she grasped the ideas, and the fulness with which she shared the enthusiasm of the speaker; the tear which now and then trembled on her eyelid, was significant of the sensibility awakened by the pathos which marked some portions of his appeal, and when, finally, the Christian orator commended them all to the keeping of their common Father, her face was expressive of the fervent aspirations of the uplifted soul.

The heart that has been stirred to its utmost depths by the power of an eloquent and truthful tongue, shrinks almost with a sense of pain from those common-place questionings and rejoinders which disturb an elevated train of thought, and grate harshly upon the refined taste. Thus, the impulse which led the shy and reserved Alick to exclaim in a whisper to Mabel, as soon as the address drew to a termination, "Let us try and get out before the crowd, Auntie," met with a corresponding prompting on her part; but finding that the suggestion could not be carried into effect without indecorous haste, and the possibility of giving offence, she made the best of her situation, suffered herself to be carried along with the rest of the throng, and responded good-naturedly to the various comments and criticisms upon the orator and the oration which saluted her on every side. Murray, meanwhile, acting as their pilot, made himself, as he never failed to do, universally popular by his boyish gallantry to the farmers' wives, his rattling and jocose conversation with sturdy and rough-looking men, and his droll

and mischievous pranks with little children, and boys of his own age, preserving, at the same time, a spice of aristocratic dignity which characterised him, and so marshalling his aunt and brother through the thickest of the press, that to their astonishment they found themselves among the earliest to leave the building.

"Is n't he a splendid fellow, Aunt Mabel?" exclaimed Murray, as they hastened in the direction of home. "Did n't you feel proud of him? I did. Was n't it grand to think our prairie friend turned out, after all, to be the orator of the evening?"

"Yes, very," replied Mabel, in an absent way; but Murray, too much excited to need further encouragement, rattled on for some time in a similar strain, and closed by saying in a tone of confidence, "Al liked it, I know, because he did n't say a word; he never does when he 's pleased; but," added the boy, who had now learned to love and appreciate his brother, "he 'll prove it to us one of these days, I expect, in a way that speaks louder than words."

"Alick will not forget it very soon, shall you, Alick?" said Mabel.

"Nobody who heard it will ever forget it," said Alick.

"Aunt Mabel," cried Murray, "did you see how interested grand-father was?"

"Yes, Murray, he looked ten years younger than usual to-night."

"And he will bring Mr. Percival home with him, wont he? I saw him shaking hands with him after the lecture."

Mabel had no doubt of it, as their uncle Harry had assured her that his friend brought a note of introduction to her father.

"Well here we are," cried Murray, as he threw open the house door. "Aunt Sabiah talks about coincidences. We have got one to tell her now that will make her open her eyes."

"My sister, Miss Vaughan — my daughter — my grandsons," said Mr. Vaughan, with ceremonious gravity, as about

half an hour later he ushered Percival into the parlor, and introduced him to his family.

Miss Sabiah made her usual stiff courtesy, but the young people, to the no small astonishment of Mr. Vaughan, came forward, almost before the words had left his lips, and shook hands with their guest, not with the air of those who are making a new acquaintance, but with the prompt cordiality with which one welcomes a familiar friend; while the smiles which were interchanged, and the mutual congratulations and good understanding which succeeded, proved them to have previous knowledge of one another.

"You perceive, Sir, that I am not a stranger to your family," said Percival. "I had the pleasure of travelling in company with them, this afternoon."

"And we," said Mabel, "in our anxiety to do honor to our expected guest, suffered him to walk nearly a dozen miles over the prairie. We could not have taken advantage of your kindness with a quiet conscience, if we had known the effort you would be called upon to make this evening."

"I assure you, that neither walking nor public speaking are an effort to me," said Percival. "I have accustomed myself, in the superintendence of my farm, to twice the amount of exercise I have had to-day, and, perhaps, the same cause has insured me healthy lungs. I only hope that yourself and my young friends here feel as little sense of fatigue as I do."

They all disclaimed any weariness from their journey; and then, to relieve Mr. Vaughan's perplexity, Percival gave an outline of their little adventure, treating the matter lightly, however, and claiming no merit for the essential aid he had rendered.

As it appeared, upon inquiry, that he had had no opportunity for refreshment of any sort since he halted at a village tavern, a little before mid-day, Mabel hastened from the room, "on hospitable thought intent," and while Mr. Percival engaged her father upon the subject of agriculture, and especially Harry's successful farming, in which the old gentleman had never before appeared to take the slightest interest, she assisted

Melissa in spreading a table and preparing an inviting repast. All were soon gathered round the neat and plentiful board, at which Mabel presided with as much grace and dignity as if she had held the seat of honor in her father's New York mansion, with Robert, the well-trained waiter, standing behind her chair. Aunt Sabiah, who had long since resigned all responsible offices, occupied a seat at her niece's right hand, and, as she only joined the rest for sociability's sake, kept on with her knitting—that favorite employment which she now no longer pursued from habit merely, since Alick, Murray, and even Harry, despite his former raillery, had long since found a way to give shape to the warm stockings, for which they were indebted to her industry. Mr. Vaughan, contrary to his usual habits, sipped a cup of chocolate, while Percival and the boys (boys are always hungry) did justice to the cold ham, bread, and tarts. The appetites of all were fully satisfied, however, and still they lingered at the table. Mr. Vaughan, ordinarily silent and reserved, was roused to animation and interest, as he conversed with Percival on the great events of the day. Sabiah forgot her shyness, and the drowsiness which usually overtook her at intervals was effectually dispersed, as their young guest illustrated the subjects under discussion by many a sparkling anecdote or striking incident. The boys were encouraged to contribute their share to the social interchange of thought; and Mabel's opinions and feelings were deferred to with that consideration which highminded men are ever ready to pay to intelligent women. Thus midnight found them still enjoying each other's society, and it was not until the loud striking clock reminded them of the hour, that, with mutual expressions of surprise at its being so late, the little party separated for the night.

"Good morning, Auntie," cried Murray, as, the next day soon after sunrise, he called to her from outside the pantry, adjoining the kitchen, where she was busy in making some preparation for breakfast; and, as he spoke, the affectionate, thoughtless boy flung open the blinds and disclosed the figure of Mabel

standing just within the open window moulding some biscuit with the cover of the dredging-box which she held in her hand.

His salutation was responded to with heartiness and good humor, nor did the young housewife blush, or seem in the least disconcerted, upon perceiving their guest, who, dressed in his hunting suit, and with rifle on his shoulder, was leaving the house with the boys, and who, like them, paused to inquire after her health and speak of the beauty of the morning.

And why should she blush? On the contrary, she had reason to be proud of the picture which the sunshine revealed, as it streamed through the apartment. The spotless shelves, with their glittering rows of pans, the almost polished floor, the exquisite order and neatness of all the domestic paraphernalia, were only equalled by the good taste and harmony observable in the person of the fair mistress of the establishment, who, attired in a simple lilac print (none the less becoming to her faultless figure because her own hands had made it), with a snowy collar, and smooth, glossy hair, stood radiant with the beauty of the girl, and serene with the chastened benignity of womanhood.

"We have heard some wild ducks in the direction of the river," said Percival, "and are going to have a shot at them."

"I shall come home with a proof of my skill; see if I don't, Aunt Mabel!" cried Murray, running forward and gaily tossing his cap in the air.

Percival and Alick followed, laughing at Murray's confidence and zeal. Mabel wished them success, and stood looking after them a moment, her rosy-tipped fingers, slightly besprinkled with flour, resting meanwhile on the moulding board; then closing the blinds, without, however, shutting out from the mind's eye the image of that manly form and open countenance which carried with them a cheerful and magical influence, she quietly resumed her occupation. After delivering the pan of biscuit to Melissa's charge, and leaving to her, also, the cooking of Bayard's prairie fowl, in the serving of which she was an adept, Mabel joined her aunt in the parlor, and had not yet laid down the Bible, from which she had, by Sabiah's request, been

reading a chapter aloud, when the sportsmen returned from their excursion to the river-side.

"Ah, you have been fortunate, Murray!" said she, as she observed a pair of silver-breasted ducks, which the latter had thrown down upon the grass.

"Yes," said the boy, in a slightly disappointed tone, "but Alick shot them."

"Murray spoke just before he fired," said Percival, "and startled them so that they rose; then Alick fired the other barrel and shot them on the wing."

Mabel looked meaningly at Murray and laughed.

"I know," said Murray, good-naturedly. "I thought of it myself; it is just as you always say, Auntie; I do the boasting and Al carries away the prize."

"Must you leave us so early?" said Mr. Vaughan, in a tone of positive regret, as immediately after breakfast Bayard's horse was brought to the door.

"I fear I must, sir," replied Percival, turning away from Rosy's picture, at which he had been gazing attentively; "a similar duty to that which brought me here last night summons me to-day to a distance of some forty miles; but I hope at some future time to have the privilege of enjoying and returning your hospitality."

Mr. Vaughan, seeming for the first time to realize that his present home could be rendered attractive, pressed upon Bayard his desire to welcome him there as often as might be, and still further astonished his family by declaring that he was soon going to see Harry, and would take the same opportunity of paying Mr. Percival a visit.

Mabel was standing on the door-step when Bayard came to bid her farewell. He had shaken hands with Sabiah in the inner room. Mr. Vaughan and the boys had walked down to the roadside, where James was attaching the saddlebags to the saddle. For the first time, therefore, she saw him apart from the rest of the household. She gave him a few last messages for his mother; then, as he lingered, evidently loth to depart, she said in a hesitating, tremulous voice, "It is now more than

six years, Mr. Percival, since you did me a kindness which few would have attempted, and which few could have done. I have never thanked you; I never can, — but I trust you believe that I can never forget it."

"Miss Vaughan," said he, "I did only what common humanity demanded of one who had the soul of a man; it has been left for you to teach me the higher and holier lesson of what may be accomplished by a woman. Your brother makes no secret, with his friends, at least, of the priceless blessings which he owes to a sister's love."

"Harry has an appreciating disposition," said Mabel, "and his good heart makes him grateful for the affection and kindness which he always feels to be beyond his merits. The events of that night, which are so fixed in my memory, have happily passed from his, but of your consistent friendship in later years he can never say enough."

"It is a friendship which is invaluable to me," said Percival. "Harry is a noble fellow, — worthy of the sister who has made him what he is. I am most proud and happy to have met you again, Miss Vaughan." He paused, seemed anxious to add something more, — hesitated, and then, with an embarrassment foreign to his usual manner, bade her an abrupt farewell.

Mr. Vaughan and the boys, after seeing him ride off, walked slowly back to the house, and the ordinary events of their daily life succeeded. But, although Percival had been their guest for one night only, his presence and influence had left no ordinary impression upon every individual of the family, and it was long before any of them could cease to be conscious of the void which his departure had created in their circle.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Bread of our souls! whereon we feed;
True manna from on high!
Our guide and chart! wherein we read
Of realms beyond the sky.

BERNARD BARTON.

EVER since the period of Mr. Gracie's sickness and death, the mind of Mr. Vaughan had seemed to some degree weaned from the one haunting and harrowing subject to which its energies had for the last ten years been directed, and the River Valley Railroad, with all the expectations involved in it, though not abandoned by him, had ceased to absorb his thoughts. The saddening and solemnizing event which had deprived him of a valued friend, could not fail to remind him of the mortality which sets bounds to all earthly schemes. The presence of the bereaved orphan in his household had excited in him a truly paternal sympathy; and finally, her marriage with his son, in which he took a deeper satisfaction than was suffered to appear, had imparted to his present experience a genuine and touching interest, which had for a time dispelled the eager and calculating spirit by which he had hitherto been actuated.

Thus he was, as we have seen on the occasion of Percival's visit, more than usually alive to topics relating to the public welfare, and not only took upon himself readily the duties of a host, but manifested in the young man's society a pleasure and animation truly astonishing to those who knew him only as the abstracted, self-absorbed, and disappointed man.

Scarcely had this agreeable episode in his ordinary life terminated, however, when the old man once more became a prey to the all-engrossing object of his fond aspirations, and

the mind which had partially recovered its equanimity, was plunged into the mad vortex of bewildering and exciting emotions.

That effervescent and speculative portion of the community, which is ever anxious to push the car of progress to an alarming rate of speed, and on whom Mr. Vaughan had throughout based all his reliance, began once more to turn their eyes to that comprehensive scheme of public improvement, which included the realization of his hopes; and the torch thus kindled proved all-sufficient to fire his slumbering energies with a new and lively enthusiasm. Communications were received and dispatched by every mail; Mabel and the boys being employed as amanuenses by the enfeebled man, whose trembling hand could no longer keep pace with his excited ideas. Messengers arrived from various directions, engineers and surveyors made their appearance in the vicinity, and routes, boundaries and grades, stocks, contracts, and government appropriations, were the engrossing subjects of thought, conversation, and correspondence. Once more the roll of charts, recently fallen into comparative disuse, was brought forward, examined, and allotted a conspicuous place on the table of the little parlor, now become the scene of eager consultations; and once more old Sorrel was called into requisition for those journeyings which Mr. Vaughan, despite his years, undertook as readily as in former times, usually accompanied, however, by one of his grandsons, both of whom shared Mabel's anxious sense of responsibility concerning him.

But this period of suspense and agitation proved as short-lived as it was sudden and engrossing. Difficulties presented themselves on every hand, public appropriations were refused, private resources failed to be forthcoming, discouragement succeeded discouragement, and finally, after a fortnight of vain discussion, the originators of the movement, having exhausted their fruitless zeal, dropped off one by one, and the early pilot on this voyage of adventure found himself, as he had so often done before, standing solitary and deserted amid the wreck of his fallen hopes.

It was too much for him; and on the day when, forsaken by his allies, he beheld the downfall of the last stronghold on which his expectations had been founded, he turned his steps homeward, and, with a despairing countenance, trembling gait, and hoary head sunk upon his breast, declined all nourishment, and sought his bed, from which he seemed destined never to rise again.

Nor was it mental despondency alone which had thus reduced him. In his eager pursuit of the fortune which he felt to be at length almost within his grasp, he had spared himself neither privation, exposure, nor fatigue, frequently continuing abroad until a late hour, unprotected from the heavy night-dews, eating his meals with but little appetite or regularity, and deprived, by excitement, of all natural and refreshing rest. These circumstances, acting upon a constitution already enfeebled by anxiety and years, could have but one result; and when, at last, the suspense was ended, and the blow of final disappointment struck home, it was disease no less than despair, which prostrated the aged man, and alarmed his family at once for his reason and his life.

He asked no questions, expressed no wants, and made no complaints; his only sign of intelligence being conveyed in the mournful inquiry with which he scanned the faces about him, as if seeking to discover whether his family shared his anguish at the bursting of fortune's bubble; and it was not until symptoms of pneumonia made their appearance, that the village physician was summoned and his condition rightly understood.

All ordinary avocations were now abandoned, and the whole household united in attentions and devotion to one whom Mabel's example, no less than their own feelings, had taught them to regard with that tenderness which is usually paid exclusively to infancy. His comfortable bed-room opened directly into their only parlor; but the perfect quiet which reigned there was never disturbed by this circumstance, for even Murray shared the general solicitude, and softened his voice instinctively the moment he entered the house. Mabel, whose capabilities as a nurse had been well proved already,

was ever at the post of duty, reinforced and aided, however, by Alick, who, patient, gentle, and capable as a woman, placed himself at his grandfather's bedside and waited on him with an assiduity which was touching in a youth of his years. Thus nursed with the most faithful devotion, and preserved from every agitating sight and sound, it soon became evident that while Mr. Vaughan's outward man was wrestling with deep-seated disease, and his life hung, as it were, upon a thread, his mind was gradually resuming more than its wonted calmness, and his face was marked with serenity and repose. His eye, which at times had been penetrating in its stare, or blank with vacuity, now wore a mild, benignant expression as it was turned upon his daughter, sister, and grandchildren; and as he watched their movements about his room, his countenance indicated pleasure and satisfaction at the peace, harmony, and good order which pervaded the apartment.

As his disease approached the stage when the physician confessed apprehensions for the life of his patient, Murray was despatched to communicate the tidings to Harry and Helen, who hastened to him without delay; but, on their arrival, the crisis had already passed, the patient had rallied, and there was now a prospect of his speedy recovery.

"I thought I never should see you again, my boy," said the feeble invalid, as he stretched out his wasted hand and clasped that of his son in cordial and tender greeting. "I have been very ill."

The strong man was subdued in Harry, as he beheld the wasted form of his father, and marked the unusual depth and pathos of his tones. He could not trust himself to speak, but sat down at the head of the bed, a little out of sight.

"I have had another disappointment, Harry," said the old man, in a low, expressive tone, at the same time turning his head a little that he might see his son's face. "Did you know that?"

"Yes, father," said Harry; "I know all about it, and I hope it is the last you will ever have on the subject. It is not worth a regret, except for the illness it has caused you. No advan-

tage we could have from that quarter could make us half so happy as we shall be now, when we see you well again."

Mr. Vaughan, who had turned his eyes in another direction, once more fixed them on his son, as if to judge of his sincerity; then, apparently satisfied, he inquired for Helen, who at once came forward, saying, "Here I am, Sir, only waiting my turn!"

He smiled affectionately upon her, thanked her for coming so far to see a sick old man, made her sit down on the side of his bed, and would have wearied himself with questioning her concerning her new home, but the doctor fortunately came in at the moment and saved him from the consequences of too much fatigue.

"Leave the door open, Mabel," said he, when his daughter, who, later in the evening came to bring him a cup of tea, was about to close the door opening into the parlor. "Do not be afraid of disturbing me; I like to hear you talk. Inquire of Harry about his farm and his crops, and tell him about Mr. Percival's visit to us and his address to the people."

Wondering, scarcely daring to trust the evidence of her senses, Mabel did as she was requested, asking herself, meanwhile, what could have awakened in her hitherto self-absorbed and indifferent parent, such a thoughtful interest in his children's conversation and pursuits. She half suspected that it had its source in feverish excitement, and that he would experience, in consequence, a wakeful night, possibly a relapse. But, on the contrary, the soft murmur of pleasant voices seemed to have a soothing influence upon the invalid, for his sleep was more than usually refreshing, and, so far from his suffering a relapse, two days after, when Harry and Helen left to return home, he was decidedly convalescent.

One evening, while he was still confined to his bed, Mabel, who had been sitting beside him for an hour or more, rose, listened a moment to his regular breathing, then, believing him to be asleep, went cautiously out into the parlor, and, in her anxiety to close the latch gently, unintentionally left the door ajar. It was the season of the brilliant harvest moon, whose rays were streaming across the floor, and Sabiah, who always

loved a moonlight night, was enjoying it at her favorite window. Weary with the labors of the day, and suffering also from a headache, which was unusual to her, Mabel approached with a languid step, and, sitting down on a low footstool, leaned against her aunt's knee. They had remained thus in silence for some time, when Sabiah almost startled her niece by the abruptness and warmth with which she exclaimed, "Mabel, I am afraid you will be an old maid!"

The low, merry laugh which succeeded Mabel's first astonishment at her aunt's earnestness, seemed to signify how little she dreaded the doom of which Sabiah had such a fearful foreboding.

"Ay, you may laugh now," said Sabiah, "but it will be a different thing when you come to be an old woman and have nobody to love you or take care of you. You think you can't do enough for those boys, and Harry, and your father, and me, and you never stop to ask what is going to become of yourself. It's well enough, now, while you can have the comfort of feeling that we could n't do without you, but what if you should find yourself at last all alone in the world, with nobody to care whether you lived or died?"

"Has it been so with you, Aunt?" asked Mabel.

"No, child!" answered Sabiah, with feeling, at the same time smoothing Mabel's hair tenderly with her hand. "I thank God for the mercy with which he is leading me on the down-hill of life. But don't trust to my experience. You won't find another Mabel in the world."

"I shall always find somebody to love," said Mabel; "somebody to whom I can be of use."

"Yes, I am sure of that," said Sabiah. "You'll find such, if any body can; but if there was one thing more than another that I have prayed might come to pass, it was that I might live to see you a happy wife. But, oh! there's disappointments everywhere. When you were in New York I used always to be afraid some scapegrace would be hanging round after your father's money. There was Mr. Dudley — to be sure, I always liked him, and thought something would come of his following

you up so sharp, but you could n't seem between you to make that go."

Mabel smiled thoughtfully, as she remembered the indiscriminate zeal with which her aunt had always espoused Dudley's interests. There was no other emotion awakened in her heart, however, at the mention of his name. The events connected with this early preference, viewed as they were through the glass of a memory laden with anxieties and care, seemed to be rather a part of her child-life, than a bitter and realized fact in her womanhood.

"And now, out here," continued Sabiah,— "well, they used to say, when I was a gal, if you are meant to be married, you will be, and you may as well sit in the chimney corner and wait; but, la, one might wait here to all eternity and never see any body that was good enough for you. Ah, that 's the rub, after all, to find any body that 's good enough for you, Mabel!"

"I never saw but one person that was good enough for her," said Alick, who had come in unperceived.

"And who was that, pray?" asked Sabiah.

"Mr. Percival."

"Well," said Sabiah, "I know you boys think there never was anything that could hold a candle to him. And so he is a handsome fellow, and very entertaining; but he is n't thinking about a wife. His head is full of politics. Besides, I always have a dread of your political characters — they make the most miserable husbands."

"Aunt Mabel," said Alick, whose thoughtful mind often led him from the special topic of conversation into the wider field of philosophy, "do you think a man is any more likely to forget simple, every-day duties, because he is engaged in a great work, and has a great object in view?"

"I think it depends altogether upon his motives, Alick," replied Mabel. "If he is influenced merely by selfishness and ambition, he would probably pursue his prize at the expense of every other claim, whether small or great; but I do not believe that a man who is actuated by pure Christian benevolence is

any less faithful to simple duties, because he is also striving to benefit humanity in a larger sphere of usefulness."

"Nobody can doubt that Mr. Percival is disinterested," said Alick; "he proved it when he was not much older than I am. Did you know, Auntie, that he inherited a handsome property from an uncle of his mother's, when he was only eighteen years old, and that, as soon as he became of age, he insisted upon dividing it with his half-sister, a widow, who has several children and is lame? He took this Western property for his share, at a very high valuation, and gave up all the rest, except a portion which was secured to his mother for her life time. General Percival objected very much to the arrangement, because he feared his brother would regret it when he grew older. But so far from that, a few years ago, when the General was ill, and on half pay, Bayard assisted him very much in the education of his family, and even had his daughter, Bessie, thoroughly instructed in music."

"Who told you this, Alick? Not Mr. Percival?" said Mabel, at the same time pondering in her mind Dudley's insinuations concerning the difficulty which had existed in the family with regard to settling the estate.

"Oh, no! Uncle Harry heard of it from a gentleman whose father was one of the trustees of the property. But I know that it cost Mr. Percival a sacrifice; because I mentioned to him the other morning that I had a great desire to go into one of the territories and settle, when I got older, and he remarked, that when he was of my age he had a strong preference for living in New York, but that he was very glad he decided as he did."

"Auntie," said Murray, who had come in while Alick was speaking, "I wonder why grandfather cares so much about making a great fortune. Uncle Harry says that Al and I ought to be very thankful we have got our own living to earn, for that money came very near being the ruin of him, and that Mr. Percival, although he would have been a fine man anywhere, would never have been the man he is if he had not been obliged to exert himself."

"Wealth is a great temptation, and a great responsibility," said Mabel. "I hope, if you ever possess it, you will have first learned how to make it truly valuable."

A conversation now ensued with reference to the boys' future choice of professions, in which they might hope for usefulness and success; a not infrequent subject of discussion, but which was, on this occasion, terminated by Mabel's remarking, "It is getting late, boys; Aunt Sabiah looks tired, and we shall have ample time to consider the comparative merits of the different professions before either of you are obliged to come to a decision. In the mean time, we will remember that the most honorable calling for each of us, is that which we are best capable of fulfilling. Murray, please ask Melissa for a light. Shall we read now, Aunt Sabiah?" and rising from her low seat, Mabel took the Bible and prayer-book from the table, and when Murray came back with the lamp, read, according to their evening custom, a portion of Scripture and a simple prayer, such as she and the boys had become familiar with from long use of their little service-book. Aunt Sabiah, who had formerly held herself aloof from this act of social worship, now joined in it with humble fervor; while as the sound of their united voices penetrated to the ears of one, who, through the open door of the adjoining room, had overheard every syllable that fell from their lips during the evening, another aged heart was touched, and another voice responded in an earnest Amen.

"Good night, my daughter," said Mr. Vaughan, as Mabel was leaving his room, after moving about with a light step to see that everything was arranged for his comfort, shading the lamp with her hand, lest its rays might wake the supposed sleeper.

"Are you awake, father?" asked she, in some surprise.

"Yes, my child, wide awake; more so than for many a long year. My eyes are opened at last, Mabel, to the truths to which they have long—too long—been closed; come and kiss me before you go to bed." And as she stooped over him to fulfil the unusual request, he added, "you are a good girl, my dear—a great blessing to your old father."

The next evening, when one of the boys went to seek the Bible in its customary place, it could not be found. Mabel rose to assist in the search, and at length discovered it on the little table beside her father's bed, with his spectacles between its covers. Occasionally, afterwards, it was missing, and was found in the same place; and once Mabel observed the old man attentively reading it. He laid it down, upon perceiving her, however, and no remark was made on either side.

At length his strength, which was only restored by slow degrees, became so far established that he was able to leave his room, and once more take his place at the parlor fireside. One day, when he had been thus seated for some hours, gazing into the fire, communing with his own thoughts and apparently unconscious of everything around him, he suddenly lifted his head and exclaimed to his daughter, who was the only person present, "Mabel, bring me my charts!"

With trembling reluctance she obeyed him; though as she placed the roll in his hand she still retained a slight hold upon it, longing to intercede and beg him to refrain from harassing his mind with the dreaded subject, but restrained by filial deference from thus interfering. His manner, however, was decisive, and she relinquished the papers, still maintaining her place beside him, and awaiting his movements. To her astonishment, he deliberately unrolled the outside chart, and without hesitation tore it down the middle, and committed the fragments to the flames; then removing the next, he dealt with it in like manner, and so on, successively, until the whole were consumed.

Great as had been Mabel's horror of this deceitful schedule of future fortune, she could not resist a sudden shudder and sensation of alarm, as she thus witnessed the annihilation of the time-worn papers, which she had learned to regard with a species of awe. She was reassured, however, by the calm, self-satisfied smile with which her father looked up at her, when the work of destruction was accomplished. More completely still was she conscious of the sanity of his purpose, when, laying his hand upon the Bible, which rested on the

table beside him, he said, solemnly, "Henceforward, Mabel, this is my only chart; and the only road which shall engross my thoughts, is that which leadeth to eternal rest. I have striven too long after the things which perish, forgetful of those which endure unto everlasting life. I have coveted for my children the wealth which would have been to them but a snare, while they, without my aid, have sought and found the pearl of great price. Yes, Mabel, I have been strangely blind to the welfare of my family; but God has done for me and mine more and better than I could ask or think."

"We are very happy, father," said Mabel, "far more so than when the world envied our good fortune."

"I see it, my child; I understand it now," said the old man, with a serene smile. "The Lord has dealt bountifully with me; He has given me the true riches, and made my children a crown of glory to my aged head. Henceforth my prayer shall be. 'Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths!'"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

God calls our loved ones, but we lose not wholly
What He hath given;
They live on earth, in thought and deed, as truly
As in His Heaven.

J. G. WHITTIER.

As soon as Harry could be released from the cares attending the harvesting of his crops, he came again to his father's, partly to share his sister's joy in the old gentleman's restoration to health and peace of mind, and still more to persuade Mabel, if possible, to return home with him. Both he and Helen had, on their former visit, observed her unusual paleness, varied only by a feverish flush which seemed to denote an exhausted state of the system; and they had only awaited Mr. Vaughan's complete recovery, to insist upon her coming to them for recreation and change of scene.

Mabel, who felt no other symptoms of illness than an unusual lassitude and occasional headache, would have resisted Harry's pleadings; but her father, realizing how severely her strength had recently been taxed, warmly seconded the proposition, and even intimated the probability that, if they found themselves equal to the jaunt, he and Sabiah would join her at the farm, in the course of a few weeks.

It was pleasant to see the joyousness which mantled Harry's face at this voluntary suggestion on the part of Mr. Vaughan. "Come up early next month," exclaimed he (it was now October), "and stay with us until after Thanksgiving! All of you, I mean," added he, glancing at Sabiah, and from her to the boys; "that is a day which allows of no exceptions; and Helen and I shall be rejoiced to make it an occasion for welcoming you all at once."

"We have everything to be thankful for, my son," said Mr. Vaughan, surveying the little group collected around him, with a pride far deeper than that of former days; "we will meet together as you propose, and praise God in our hearts for his wonderful goodness to us."

It being thus arranged that the rest of the household were to follow in a few weeks, Harry hurried Mabel with her preparations, and the next day she accompanied him to the abode of plenty and contentment, where his happy young wife was impatiently awaiting their arrival.

"Now remember, Mabel," said Helen, when the former was at length installed in the room which Harry in building the house had denominated Mabel's, "you are to do nothing while you are here, but ride, and walk, and talk, and waste time, if you choose to term it so, in every possible way. You have had more than your share of cares and duties for the last five years, and lately have been quite worn out with them; so now you are to consider that no one has the slightest claim upon you. You are to keep your hands folded in this fashion (and she playfully placed them in a most indolent attitude), and are to make it the chief business of your life to be idle."

Mabel declared with a languid air, which was more felt than feigned, that she should have no difficulty in obeying these rules, for if the weather continued as at present, she could spend whole days satisfactorily in gazing out of the window.

This unusual lassitude, and low, feverish tendency, which had been observed in her before she left home, became more marked, now that she was freed from all necessity for exertion; and Harry, no less than Helen, sought to dissipate the effects of too much anxiety and confinement, by insisting that she should spare herself all fatigue, and keep as much as possible in the open air. Thus, every day, upon some pretext or other, her brother persuaded her to accompany him in his drives about the farm, usually leaving her in some shaded spot, while he went to oversee his laborers; when she, partly occupied with a book, and partly engaged in the observation of nature,

enjoyed the healthy recreation, and quiet sense of repose, of which she stood greatly in need.

One morning, when they were returning from one of these excursions, they perceived a neat little pleasure carriage standing before the door, which Harry recognized as belonging to Percival; and, at the same moment, Mabel saw through the window the unmistakable form of his venerable mother who, at the announcement of Mabel's approach, had risen from her seat, and with a smiling countenance was awaiting the arrival of her young friend.

The old lady's figure was firm and erect as ever; her eye had lost nothing of its brightness; and her countenance, though more strongly marked with the lines of age, still wore its mild and winning benignity of expression. Nor had time had power to diminish the tender interest which she cherished for Mabel, as was evident from the heartiness with which she advanced to meet the eager and excited girl, and fold her in a warm embrace, saying, "Ah, my dear child, I see you then at last. I began to think this was a pleasure which was to be forever denied me!"

Mabel could not find words to express the joy she felt at the unexpected meeting; but Madam Percival who read her countenance aright, and saw that she was well nigh overpowered by the train of moving associations which it called up, responded to her broken ejaculations of surprise and delight, by pressing her once more to her side, saying — "These re-unions are blessed things my dear! — and here is my patient Bessie, too, waiting to claim you as an old friend."

Mabel, who had not had a thought for any one but Madam Persival, now followed the direction of the old lady's eyes, and her face lighted up with fresh satisfaction as she beheld Bayard's favorite niece and her own devoted champion, scarcely altered in appearance since she had seen her last, and with her enthusiasm for Mabel undiminished, as was evident from the beaming face with which she watched her movements, and now, as she saw herself recognized, came forward with outstretched hand.

"And do you know my sister? have you made the acquaint-

ance of Mrs. Vaughan," asked Mabel, as having exchanged cordial salutations with Bessie, she glanced towards Helen, who was a deeply interested and smiling spectator of the scene.

"Yes, my dear," said Madam Percival, "I have been impatient for some time past to make Mrs. Vaughan's acquaintance, and must acknowledge that she was the sole object of our visit to-day; we had no idea of the double pleasure that was in store for us."

Numerous questions and responses now succeeded. Madam Percival had earnest inquiries to make concerning every member of Mr. Vaughan's family, especially the boys, to an account of whose growth and progress she was lending a most attentive ear, while Helen and Bessie were busily chatting together, when the entrance of Harry, who had been detained by one of his neighbors, served to give a more general tone to the conversation.

Madam Percival still kept Mabel close beside her, however, and at length remarked, with some little anxiety in her tone,— "They tell me, my dear, that you are not well — that you have had too much care of late; — so, though I should not judge it from your face (Mabel's face was a little flushed by the excitement of the interview), I wish to make it a plea for begging you away from Mrs. Vaughan for a few days; that is if you will trust yourself to an old friend's care, as readily as you once did when she was a stranger. Come," added she, laying her hand earnestly on Mabel's shoulder, by way of enforcing the request — "will you indulge me so far as to go home with us to-day? — we will restore you on Sunday when we meet your brother at church."

Mabel thanked her most warmly, professed unbounded confidence in that kindness and care of which she had formerly experienced the benefit, but at the same time hesitated, and gave a somewhat evasive reply to the invitation, saying that she considered herself under Helen's orders, and doubted her consent.

"Oh, please do as grandmamma proposes," exclaimed Bessie, while Madam Percival turned to Helen to urge her claims;

"we shall be so delighted to have you with us! uncle Bayard is absent attending court all the time and we miss him so much!"

Perhaps Bessie, who still cherished a painful recollection of her uncle's severe and unjust criticism of Mabel, might have suspected that he was an object of her avoidance and dislike, and so artfully added this last clause by way of assuring her that she would not be subjected to his society; if so, her suspicions were probably confirmed by the fact that when Madam Percival triumphantly announced Helen's consent to grant the required leave of absence, Mabel no longer manifested any want of alacrity in accepting the invitation, and expressed without reserve the pleasure she should have in accompanying them.

"But, there is a condition!" exclaimed Harry. "My dear Madam — you will not overlook the proviso in the case. I have already had your horses led to the stable, and Mrs. Vaughan depends upon your company to dinner."

"I intended to return immediately," said Madam Percival, "and left word to that effect at home; but as Mrs. Vaughan assures me that an early dinner is no inconvenience in her household, and my young friend here may need a little time to prepare for a three days absence, I think, Bessie, we will astonish Mrs. Patten by playing truant to-day."

And the venerable lady, who knew how to accommodate herself with ready grace to all circumstances in life, allowed Mabel to assist in the removal of her bonnet and shawl, and during the space of a couple of hours, which was the limit of her visit, entered with cordial zeal into the interests of the youthful group by whom she was surrounded, and by the charm of her manners and conversation imparted both ease and spirit to the social occasion, without once derogating in the least from the dignity which became her years.

As dinner was served with great punctuality, and Madam Percival was anxious to reach home before sundown, no further delay was suffered to interfere with her departure, and at an early hour in the afternoon the party set off; Mabel and the old lady on the back seat of the light pleasure carriage, and Bessie

stationed in front, beside a serious looking youth who officiated as coachman to the establishment.

It was one of those lovely days belonging to the somewhat disputed period of the Indian summer, which, whether it occurs earlier or later, is marked by characteristics peculiar to the American Autumn. The atmosphere was suffused with that peculiar haziness which, without obscuring the sun, subdues and mellows its rays, and imparts a singular brilliancy to the rich and variegated foliage. The sky, unspotted by a cloud, was of the clearest and brightest blue, while the outline of the distant horizon was rendered shadowy and indistinct by the light curtain of mist which enveloped all nature; and as the eye at intervals roamed across the boundless waves of the rolling prairie, the great hay ricks discerned through the distance and fog might almost be mistaken for islands in mid ocean or ships with outspread sails. For the last half of the way, the road leading to Lake Farm stretched through Percival's own land, now winding like a thread amid corn and wheat fields of nearly a mile in extent, where the golden grain was peeping from the husk and inviting the sickle of the husbandman, and now leading the traveller beneath the refreshing shade of grand primeval forests, which an English nobleman might covet. Sometimes the sound of the horses' feet would startle a squirrel or a rabbit and send it darting across their path; or a partridge would rise with a whirring sound from the tall waving grain; or, as the travellers entered the cool thicket, birds of various note would greet them with a concert of song.

Nor was this harmony of sight and sound marred by any sense of effort or constraint on the part of Mabel and her companions, who discoursed with unaffected ease, or maintained, at pleasure, that silence which is sometimes so satisfactory among those who are confident of each other's sympathetic enjoyment. As they drew within half a mile of their destination, the road led through a little grove of maples and oaks, gorgeous with brilliantly-dyed leaves, a portion of which had already fallen and bestrewed the ground; and, for the rest of the distance, Mabel was conscious that they were gradually ascending to a

higher point of land. She was not prepared, however, for the scene which awaited her, when at length, emerging from the wood, she saw the house directly before her, and took in at a glance the expansive view which the little eminence commanded. The simple but tasteful structure was built of the pale yellow stone peculiar to the region, forming a soft and beautiful contrast to the heavy verdure of a few old pines and hemlocks which stood in its immediate vicinity. It was long and low, being only a story and a half in height, but covering a wide extent of ground, having wings on either side, and including all the principal rooms on the lower floor; while across the front ran a light verandah, festooned with the graceful American woodbine, now crimson with the tints of autumn. As far as the eye could reach in every direction, save one, it was met by an open expanse of prairie, grain land, and forest, with here and there a little collection of farm-houses and a village church, but fair and extensive as was this view of the rich and open country, the involuntary exclamation of delight which burst from Mabel's lips, as she looked forth upon the prospect, was chiefly due to the emotion of joyful surprise with which she beheld, stretching far out to the eastern horizon, dancing and sparkling in the sunlight, the clear, blue waters of Lake Michigan.

"It is beautiful!" said Madam Percival, in response to Mabel's half-expressed ecstasy of pleasure; while Bessie turned her back upon the prospect to read its reflection in Mabel's eyes. "Familiar as I am with the scene," continued the old lady, "I never drive up this slope without a fresh sense of the greatness and beauty of that vast inland-ocean, in which the giant nature of the West mirrors its face; and I am always ready to congratulate my son anew on the patience with which he occupied a most primitive dwelling, until he had acquired the means to build a house to his own taste, and on the spot of his choice. It looks uncommonly pleasant this afternoon. Home is home, after a twenty miles trip, especially when Mrs. Patten stands at the door to give one welcome."

The faithful serving-woman was already on the verandah to

meet her mistress, whose unusual excursion and lengthened absence had occasioned her some anxiety. "You will not think I have been gone too long, Patten," said Madam Percival, "when you see whom I have brought back with me;" and, as Mabel leaned forward, bowed, and was recognized, the good woman confirmed her mistress' remark, by holding up both hands and exclaiming, "Bless my eyes! it's Miss Vaughan, for all the world; and the nicest young lady that ever I see,—asking your pardon, Miss Bessie," she added in a low voice, "for you never was so tried, and there's no knowing what folks is till they're tried. And, how's them children, Miss?" she continued, when Mabel had alighted, and cordially shaken her by the hand. "Almost men now, I dare say?"

"Yes, almost, Mrs. Patten; and I was afraid I had got beyond your knowledge too."

"You? dear me, no,—you look just as much like a pictur as ever, only a little pale like; but I dare say you're tired, and my mistress too, so do walk in—walk in and get rested." And the good soul led the way to the sitting-room, where a fire was already kindled, in anticipation of a cool evening. And for one half hour she was unwearied in her efforts to render them all, as she said, "right comfortable."

And right comfortable it seemed to Mabel, as the twilight hours came on and found them grouped round the wide hearth; Madam Percival, as she sat upright in her easy-chair, relating to the girls on either side of her those most delightful of all narratives, the experiences of bygone days; while the flickering flames cast a subdued, but cheerful light round the room, and were reflected in the polished furniture and the old family tea-urn under the antiquated sideboard.

The rough, new, and undeveloped character of almost every thing pertaining to Western life furnishing a wide field for the energy and activity both of body and mind, may nerve and strengthen the powers for the performance of many a trying task; but to one wearied from the overtasking of these powers, and yearning for the rest which even the youthful spirit occasionally craves, there is something unspeakably refreshing in

such ancient, and time-honored tokens as everywhere pervaded the establishment over which Madam Percival presided with that venerable dignity characteristic of the past. To Mabel especially, who had been taxed with a responsibility disproportioned to her years, and had well nigh sunk beneath the burden of recent labors, there was sweet and welcome repose in being thus sheltered under the wing of her aged friend's tender and protecting care; and even the heavily-carved chairs and tables, the Turkey carpet, the antique fire-set, and the quaint, old family plate, which were here preserved as ancestral heirlooms, all bore their part in giving to the place the secluded and familiar air of a cherished home. Thus, the first evening of her visit proved one of unmixed satisfaction, and the night that followed, brought with it sweet and dreamless rest.

"Do you feel equal to a short walk, my dear?" said Madam Percival, as she joined her young friends on the verandah the next morning, and addressed herself to Mabel, who, under Bessie's instruction, was becoming acquainted with every feature in the wide landscape.

Mabel promptly replied in the affirmative.

"Then," said Madam Percival, "I should be happy to have you both go with me to the house of my son's agent. It is only about half a mile distant; you can see the smoke from the chimney yonder; the path leads directly through the maple grove, which will furnish us with a gay carpet and awning, and the good man's wife will give us all a hearty welcome, I am sure."

Bessie, no less than Mabel, expressed her pleasure at the proposition, and, while the latter went to her room to prepare for the walk, the former ran for her own and her grandmother's bonnets.

"Now, my dear," said Madam Percival, as she took Mabel's offered arm, bearing no weight upon it, however, for she was at present the stronger of the two, — "I must tell you something of the individual whom we hope to see this morning." She then proceeded with an interesting narative of their trusty farm-agent's experiences, dated from the young man's arrival

in the West, and continued up to the present period. He had brought a small sum of money with him, but his first investment had been disastrous, the situation of his land proving unhealthy, and his crops suffering from blight; while, to crown his misfortunes, the title to his estate became a matter of dispute, and he suddenly found himself involved in legal difficulties. It was at this crisis, that he was first brought to the notice of Mr. Percival, to whom he applied for professional assistance; and Bayard's favorable impressions of the man being confirmed by a slight knowledge which his mother had previously gained of his character and worth, a proposition was made and accepted, which proved equally advantageous to both parties; the young lawyer, who was now oppressed with business, gaining a valuable and reliable agent, and the disappointed, but manly and energetic farmer, obtaining a sure and gradually increasing competence."

"And how ended the law-suit?" asked Mabel.

"It resulted in favor of my son's client," replied Madam Percival, "and he still holds possession of his estate, which, in spite of its disadvantages, has nearly doubled in value."

"And this is the farm-house!" said Mabel, as they now came in sight of a comfortable two story dwelling, surrounded by spacious and substantial barns and granaries. "How neat and thrifty everything looks!"

"That is due in no small degree to our farmer's wife," said Madam Percival; "she is one of the most good-humored, capable, and industrious women in the neighborhood, and very attractive too, as you will think when you see her pretty, round face. That row of glittering pans and pails hanging outside the house, will give you an idea of the extent of her dairy, and it was some of her sweet butter which you praised at breakfast. We may go in without knocking," she continued, as they approached, — "our good housewife is always ready for company."

Thus invited, Mabel entered at the door which stood hospitably open, and passed on to a sitting-room on the right. It was furnished in the simple style of a farmer's family; was

in perfect order, and unoccupied; there seemed nothing to startle and astonish a visitor, and yet Mabel stopped short, and stood gazing at the opposite window, like one lo in a dream. What was there in a little rush-bottomed arm-chair, a wooden foot-stool, an old leather-covered bible, and an open daguerreotype case, which could have power to transfix her in silent wonder, and send the tears coursing down her cheek? — what but the power of association, — that deep, magnetic thrill with which we gaze on the simplest memorials of one who has passed from earth, but still lives enshrined amid love's sacred memories? what but the holy awe which fills the soul as imagination calls up in vivid array, the form, the countenance, the voice, of one whose mortal has put on immortality?

Yes, there was no mistaking these mute witnesses, which had seemed a part of Rosy's little life; and for an instant Mabel stood transfixed opposite the vacant arm-chair, tearful, bewildered, and unconscious of the surprise she herself excited in Madam Percival and Bessie by her singular demeanor. The next moment, a door opened from the kitchen, and an elderly woman, with an infant in her arms, entered, and was advancing with a respectful air to speak to Madam Percival, but, seeing Mabel, she stopped short, uttered an exclamation of joy, and forgetting her customary awe of her more stately visitor, — forgetting everything but the engrossing interest of the moment, she placed the child, without apology, in Bessie's arms, and exclaiming in a broken voice, "Dear Miss Mabel! my own darling child's best friend!" she ran towards the latter, threw her arms impulsively around her, then sat down in Rosy's chair, covered her face with her hands, and wept.

Mabel, who at the sound of her voice had recognized the mother of Rose, and had cordially returned her greeting, now turned to Madam Percival to ask an explanation from one who, on her part, wore a countenance full of astonishment and inquiry, when Lydia, who had been summoned by a loud cry from the baby, made her appearance on the scene, smoothing down her apron, and buttoning the sleeves which had been turned up to her elbows. If Madam Percival and Bessie

were already astonished spectators, it may well be believed that their amazement now reached its height, as Lydia, the same excitable creature as ever, gave a sudden start, threw herself on her knees beside Mabel, caught her hand, kissed it repeatedly, laughed, cried, then laughed again, and, snatching her infant from Bessie, placed it in Mabel's arms, saying, "See my baby! is n't she a beauty?" and finally burst into tears once more, as she whispered, "Her name is Rose."

"Excuse us, Ma'am! excuse us, Miss Bessie!" said she, as, with an attempt to recover her self-possession, she came forward to pay her respects to Madam Percival and her granddaughter, "but Miss Vaughan has been such an angel of goodness to us, and our dear little Rose loved her so much!"

The excuse was not needed, however, as was evident from the cordial sympathy which shone in Madam Percival's face, as she gleaned from the mutual expressions of interest which were exchanged between Mabel and these humble friends, the nature of the tie which bound them so strongly to one another; and the good-hearted Bessie had only waited to be relieved from the care of the child, to turn her face towards the window and wipe away a tear.

"I have been telling you, my dear, as we came through the wood," said Madam Percival to Mabel, who was caressing the infant, "the experience of a mutual friend of ours, but I little suspected that I was omitting the most interesting feature of the tale; here he is, however, to speak for himself. Good morning, Mr. Dowst! You are the only person wanting to make this scene complete."

The astonishment of Mabel, the blushing bashfulness of Lydia, the contented smile of her mother, the crowing applause on the part of the baby, and the sympathetic satisfaction of Madam Percival and Bessie, indeed reached their climax, as the sturdy form of the honest Owen now appeared in the door-way, his eye bright with pleasure, and his face glowing with earnestness. "Miss Vaughan!" exclaimed he, taking off his hat, and coming forward with both his strong, hard hands

extended, "this is a day to be thankful for, and a sight to make a humble man proud."

"You speak the truth, Mr. Dowst," said Mabel. "Such a home, and wife, and child, and good name, as you can call yours, are indeed something to be proud of; and I am proud, I assure you, to claim you as an old friend."

"Ah, miss," said Owen, with his own genial smile, "I've many blessings as you say, but it's the crowning one of all that brings you under our roof. Where is my little woman?" continued he, searching round the room with his eyes for Lydia, who stood behind him, with a modest, blushing face. "She's been looking forward to this day ever since she first set foot on a prairie, though one would think to see her now, that she was ashamed of being an honest man's wife."

"She is ashamed of having kept her secret from me so long," said Mabel. "What will the boys say when they learn that Lydia is Mrs. Owen Dowst?"

"Well, 't was all along of her love for you, Miss Mabel," said Owen, apologetically. "Owen, says she, don't you hint to Mr. Harry Vaughan, or any of 'em, who you've got for a wife, — just wait till Miss Mabel comes into these parts, and sees for herself."

"A true woman," interposed Madam Percival. "I can understand it, Mrs. Dowst, for, old as I am, I have been counting ever since Miss Vaughan arrived on her surprise at finding your husband settled among us, little suspecting that there was a still greater pleasure in store for her."

"And how is Jack?" asked Mabel, when, composure being at length restored, she found herself seated next to Mrs. Hope, who had by this time claimed her sacred prerogative, — the charge of Rosy's namesake.

"Bless your heart, dear, for remembering my boy!" said the mother, with animation. "Lyddy is a good child, and never shows any of her little tempers now-a-days, and Owen has been a faithful friend to me and mine, first for Rosy's sake, and then for the love that grew out of that; but I sometimes think it's Jack, after all, that's to be the joy of my old age.

There never was a mother had a better son, Miss Mabel. He 's foreman of some works not far from here, where they manufacture farming machines; he always was an ingenious fellow, and what with Rosy helping him with his plans and figures, and so on, he got an extra good idea of mechanics, and now it stands him in good stead. He makes a handsome living, — Jack does, — and is frugal, too, though he 's got an open hand and heart."

"Oh, I am very glad!" said Mabel. "I always liked Jack; I thought he would live to be a comfort to you, Mrs. Hope."

"How could he help it?" asked the widow in a low, earnest voice. "As long as Rosy lived, did n't he have his sister to keep him in the right way? and ever since she died, has n't he had an angel? Jack was a silent boy, always; and he 's a silent sort of a man. He do n't tell his mind as some folks do, but if you could see him when he sits down in *her* chair, or reads in *her* bible, or calls this baby by *her* name, you 'd think as I do, that though it 's a voice for the heart only, Rosy, like the holy man in Scripture, 'being dead, yet speaketh.'"

"She does indeed speak to us all," said Mabel. "Though her life was short and full of suffering, it is a beautiful thought how many have been made better for the dear child 's having lived, and loved, and died. I, as well as Jack, have often felt, Mrs. Hope, that the memory of Rose's virtues was like a continual message of good cheer from a glorified saint."

"She was a precious lamb!" said the mother, sobbing. "The Lord has her in His holy keeping. I only hope we 'll all find our way one of these days into that same fold."

"Such heartfelt gratitude and affection as have been manifested towards you to-day, my dear," said Madam Percival to Mabel, when they were once more returning homeward through the grove, "are a sweet compensation for the hours stolen from gayer pleasures and devoted to works of charity and love."

"The sincere regard of these good friends is of priceless value to me," answered Mabel, "but it is a voluntary offering, not a compensation. The hours were few, indeed, which, during my New York life, were devoted to anything but selfish

pleasures. This family is the only one to whom I rendered the slightest service, and in this instance I was always the principal gainer. I can feel nothing but mortification, when I reflect how wholly I neglected my opportunities of usefulness."

"You do yourself an injustice," said Madam Percival. "I have not yet to learn the particulars of your kindness to Mrs. Hope and her sick child. They have been related to me with all a mother's enthusiasm, though I never until now knew the name of Rosy's benefactor. I was peculiarly interested in the account, for I, too, had some tender recollections of Rose, having seen her frequently, when many years ago she was under medical treatment at a public institution in New York; and I could in some degree estimate the love she cherished for you, my dear, when I learned that she bequeathed you, as a dying legacy, a little engraving, originally presented to her by my son, and always prized (so her mother tells me) as zealously as when her intense admiration for it first appealed to Bayard's generosity. Have you the picture yet?"

"I have," said Mabel. "It hangs in our parlor at home;" and as she spoke she called to mind the interest, even amounting to curiosity, with which Percival, on his recent visit, had appeared to examine both engraving and frame, no doubt identifying them as having once been his property.

"Its subject is one," said Madam Percival, "which appealed strongly to the child's heart, and which she fully exemplified in her life. She has long since gained the rest of the Eternal City; but her works yet follow her, and the road which her feet have trod is fragrant with her virtues, encouraging the succession of pilgrims who follow in her pathway, to exclaim, with consecrated purpose and will, 'In the name of our God, will we set up our banners!'"

CHAPTER XXXIX

Their home is home; their chosen lot
A private place and private name,
But, if the world's want calls, they 'll not
Refuse the indignities of fame.

THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE.

THE Sabbath which was to terminate Mabel's visit at Lake Farm dawned clear and beautiful. Since the day succeeding her arrival the weather had been cold and cloudy, and the pleasures of the household had been mostly of an indoor character. Once more, however, that soft, fragrant breath which seems to linger lovingly in the recesses of nature, had asserted its power over the early frosts; and the cloudless sky, the deep blue lake, and the gorgeously-tinted forests were radiant with the last smile of summer. It still wanted a few moments to the breakfast hour, and Mabel, with the bed-room window thrown open, stood enjoying the beauty of the landscape, and refreshing her spirit with the meditations to which it gave rise, when a few soft, long-drawn notes of music fell upon her ear, so harmonious and so perfectly in unison with the scene and the hour, that they might almost be mistaken for the sighing of the breeze through the old hemlock in front of her window. Even when gradually swelling in sound and volume they filled the air with sacred melody, there was something so soothing, so grand, and so inspiring in the strain, that she scarcely cared to question herself concerning its source, but stood enraptured and engrossed, all other senses absorbed in that of hearing. It was evidently the music of an organ, played with no ordinary power and skill; and Mabel, who had observed such an instrument in the library, experienced a dim consciousness that the sound proceeded from its pipes. But although Bessie had

assured her that she could play only simple airs upon it, and the tribute of praise which now rang through the house was a difficult and sublime composition of one of the old masters, she forgot the seeming inconsistency, and, until the piece was finished, and the glorious symphony died away into silence, she indulged no thought save the soaring aspirations to which it could not fail to give rise. As the continued and almost oppressive stillness which succeeded at length convinced her, however, that there was to be no repetition of the harmony, she started from her attitude of fixed attention, actuated by the sudden thought, "Could Bessie have deceived both herself and me in respect to her powers, or is she the subject of a sudden inspiration?" And hastily throwing a mantle over her head, she stepped from her low window upon the wide verandah, and proceeded around the front of the house in the direction of the library, mentally ejaculating, "She will be self-convicted, when I detect her with her fingers on the keys!"

The library, which was also the usual breakfast-room of the family, was situated in one of the wings at the extremity of the building; and it being Mabel's purpose to surprise her friend by unexpectedly making her appearance at the window, she was tripping lightly round an angle of the verandah, when she suddenly stopped short, and blushed with embarrassment as she encountered, face to face, the true author of the music, the young master of the house, who, having in a characteristic manner given notice of his return home, had sallied forth upon the piazza to enjoy the beauty of the morning.

Their meeting upon the lonely prairie a few weeks before was scarcely more unexpected to either party; but, as the good sense of Mabel and the active benevolence of Percival had dispelled the awkwardness of that occasion, so, now, the simple candor of the one, and the utter freedom from self-consciousness on the part of the other, quickly restored their mutual equanimity, which had for a moment been disturbed.

"I was hastening to thank Bessie for my share of enjoyment in that beautiful symphony," said Mabel, after exchanging a cordial greeting with Percival, who could not, if he would, have

disguised his pleasure at meeting her. "If I had not believed you to be nearly a dozen miles away, I should have known, without a doubt, to whom we were indebted for the music."

"I did not get released from my duties until a very late hour last evening," said Percival; "but I then felt an irresistible attraction towards home, which I can not now consider any thing less than a presentiment.

"Have you been well since I saw you last?" added he, glancing inquiringly at her face, which, the glow of sudden surprise having subsided, certainly presented a marked contrast to the hue of health which it had worn on the day of their prairie excursion.

"My friends say not," replied she, smiling, "but I scarcely own it myself, I am so little accustomed to play the part of an invalid."

"I fear it is too cold for you on this side of the house," said Bayard, who observed that the breeze had blown the scarf from her head and left it unprotected; and, with a respectful gallantry most becoming to a man of his commanding presence, he offered his arm, to accompany her to that part of the verandah which was warmed by the morning sun. As she had no longer any object in proceeding to the library, she accepted the proposition and the offered arm, and, Madam Percival not having left her room, and there being as yet no summons to breakfast, they continued to walk slowly up and down for a few minutes, while Bayard inquired with interest concerning the various members of Mr. Vaughan's family, and expressed his sincere regret at the old gentleman's illness, which he rightly conjectured to be in no slight degree connected with the evident change in Mabel.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the lively Bessie, whom they had already passed once or twice without observing, as she stood in the doorway, but who now interrupted both their progress and their conversation by her raillery, "You seem to be a man of parts, Uncle Bayard; you enter the house like a midnight robber, rouse us out of our beds at daylight with an extravaganza furiosa, and now, lo and behold! I find you pre-

scribing a new regimen to our invalid, whom grandmamma does not allow to take the air before breakfast."

"Indeed!" said Bayard, appearing to notice the last clause only in Bessie's threefold reproof, "Then I should have invited you into the library, where we have a bright fire."

"By no means," said Mabel, smiling, but at the same time withdrawing her hand from his arm and stepping inside the doorway. "No one could suffer from breathing such an atmosphere as this; Bessie is a would-be tyrant, that is all."

"She is a little scold," said Bayard, at the same time sealing with a kiss the lips which were preparing to utter a further torrent of abuse. "I never anticipate any more flattering greeting from her than that I have just received. For whom do you reserve all your fine speeches, Bessie?"

"For people whom it is no flattery to praise," said she, breaking away from him, and putting her arm within that of Mabel, in a defiant manner, which seemed to imply that they two constituted a coalition against him; "Miss Vaughan never heard me say anything but good of *her*."

The words might have escaped Bessie accidentally; but Bayard evidently felt them, for he bit his lip and seemed slightly confused by the reminiscence which they awakened, while Mabel lifted her eyes for an instant to his face, and then turning away made some abrupt remark upon the extent of the prospect.

It was a relief as well as a satisfaction, therefore, to at least two of the party, when, a moment after, a slow, measured, but touchingly tender voice was heard to say, "Good morning, my son!" and, at the same time, a soft and still beautifully formed hand was laid upon the broad white forehead of Percival, who recognizing his mother's accent and touch, turned quickly, and with a glad countenance, to receive her welcome.

It was a striking picture which was thus presented by the stately matron, and her tall, manly, Saxon-featured son, whose manner towards her was a beautiful mingling of respect, confidence, and almost boyish affection. Mabel had seen them both in many and varied relations; but never had either more fully

commanded her admiration and interest, than at this moment, when the young man stood encircling his mother's waist with his strong arm, while she looked fondly up into his clear blue eye, in which she seemed to read the fulfilment of all a parent's hopes.

"You must have travelled late, Bayard," said she. "I sat at my bed-room window watching for you until twelve o'clock, which was more than an hour after the rest of the family retired."

"I did not leave the city until midnight," replied Bayard, and it was between two and three when I arrived here; but I am astonished at your expecting me; I sent you no message."

"True; but I knew you could not resist having a peep at your garden while this fine weather lasted, to say nothing of the other attractions of home. Besides, as we wish, we are apt to believe; and I felt sure you would be disappointed if you wholly missed the pleasure of our young friend's visit," and she laid her hand expressively on Mabel's shoulder. "You had but a cheerless arrival last night," continued she, addressing Bayard; "I hope you waked Mrs. Patten, and were made comfortable."

"My only endeavor was not to disturb any one," said Bayard. "The long window in the library was unfastened, and I found matches and candles in my room. I wanted nothing more."

"Always thoughtful, my son!" said his mother, with a smile of approval; "come, shall we go to breakfast?" And taking Mabel's hand in hers, she accompanied her across the hall, making amends for having in the parent half-forgotten the hostess, by the affectionate solicitude with which she now questioned her concerning her health.

"Uncle Bayard," whispered Bessie, as she followed with her uncle, "I thought there was a certain style of beauty which you only admired at a safe distance. I am afraid you have had a chill this morning."

"Hush, hush, Bessie," said Bayard; "I humbly crave a truce. Your memory is as provoking as your tongue."

As there is nothing which leaves such a void in the family circle as the departure of its head, so there is no transformation so effectual and complete as that which is created by his sudden and unexpected return. Especially is this the case when he comes as Bayard did, in all that joyousness of spirit which marks a true love of home, and brings with him, for its entertainment and benefit, the choicest and best of all the influences and experiences which have attended him in his absence. Thus, every member of the household at Lake Farm, felt a conscious exhilaration of spirits in the mere presence of its young master. Even the servants seemed inspired with fresh energy for the performance of every duty; and the old family cat, who was exclusive in her preferences, deliberately forsook her place on the hearth-rug, and ensconced herself under his chair. Add to this the ready zeal with which he took upon himself every office, both small and great, which affection or hospitality demanded, and no one could be insensible to the fact that a wide sphere of action abroad does not necessarily unfit a man for the amenities of domestic life.

Towards Mabel, his manner was at once marked by sincere respect and cordial friendliness; nor, although conscious that Bessie was watching him with an eye full of mischief, did he fail in any of those thoughtful attentions which become a gentleman and a host; for, however he might feel annoyed by his niece's raillery, he was not one to be deterred by self-conscious shyness or awkward embarrassment from that chivalrous devotion to which Mabel was entitled as his mother's guest, independently of her personal claims as a young and beautiful woman.

"This is what my mother terms my garden, Miss Vaughan," said he, as, breakfast being ended, he rose and walked to the window, where, with folded arms, he stood looking out for a few moments on the almost interminable grain-fields which lay stretched before him, with all their golden treasures bursting from the stalk or waving heavily in the breeze.

"A noble field of labor," said Mabel, who sat where she too could command the prospect. "I confess I am almost awed by the immensity of the work and its promised rewards."

"And yet, my dear," said Madam Percival, "if you did but realize it, you have been laboring for the last six years in a far wider field, and a richer soil, where, if my son is not mistaken, the fruit is already ripe unto the harvest: I mean the hearts and minds of those two boys of yours," added she, observing Mabel's puzzled and inquiring look. "Bayard tells me that he has never seen lads more full of early promise."

Mabel colored with mingled modesty and pride at this praise of her own faithfulness and its results; and Bayard, turning round, hastened to confirm his mother's remark, congratulating her on the hopes which might reasonably be indulged in reference to her nephews, with whom he had evidently been most favorably impressed.

"Bayard's animated description of our young friends," said Madam Percival, "interested and gratified me beyond measure. It is evident, my dear, that the lads still exhibit the same marked individuality of character which distinguished them as children; but that, while the good in each has continued to gain strength, both have overcome the evil tendencies which were so apparent six years ago as to make me tremble for them and for you. As I look back to the day when we sat on the rocks at Niagara, and contemplated the solemn nature of your responsibility, I am disposed to feel no slight triumph in your success."

"If you have succeeded in the management of such rude creatures as boys are, Miss Vaughan," said Bessie, "I think you ought to write out a theory of education, for the benefit of society."

"I!" said Mabel, with simplicity, "indeed, I have had no rules, no theory; I sometimes think that the boys have taught me far more than I have them."

"Her theory may be laid down in one word," said Madam Percival, "she has *loved* her little nephews; love is an inspired teacher, Bessie, and one that may be trusted in every emergency. It has been Miss Vaughan's counsellor from the beginning. I am quite impatient" said she turning to Mabel, "for the day when you shall introduce these young gentlemen to

me once more. But my dear girls," she continued glancing at her watch, "if we are going to church this morning, it is time we were making our preparations; Bayard, have you given any directions about the horses?"

Bayard started, apologized for his absent mindedness, for he had been for the last few moments apparently lost in thought, and hastily left the room. His mother proceeded to express her regret at the prospect of so soon parting from Mabel, and at the same time suggested the possibility of obtaining a longer leave of absence from Helen; but Mabel gratefully, though firmly declined prolonging her visit, at the same time expressing the pleasure it had afforded her, and the three ladies then separated until it should be time to leave for church.

"Does not Miss Vaughan intend to return with us Bessie?" asked Bayard in a low tone as he saw Mabel's small travelling box brought from her room to be placed in the carriage.

"No, of course not," answered Bessie, feigning great astonishment at the inquiry; "she would not have come at all, if I had not taken care to let her know that you were not at home."

Though uttered in a mocking tone, this reply effectually disconcerted Bayard; the expostulations which had risen to his lips, at the signs of their guest's departure, were instantaneously checked; he stood by in constrained silence, while his mother made one more attempt to change Mabel's resolution, and even assisted in the convenient arranging of her luggage without expressing a syllable of surprise or regret. This conduct was so foreign to his usual hospitality that his mother could not fail to observe it, and Bessie, whose heart was as tender as her tongue was tantalizing felt a pang of self-reproach, as she observed how completely her revengeful shaft had struck home.

This constraint was but momentary, however, and the drive which succeeded was one of exquisite pleasure to all parties; the softness of the air and the quiet beauty of the scene serving to compose their minds to that calm, religious meditation, which was suited to the occasion and the hour; while for conversation, Madam Percival who occupied the back seat with Mabel, gave her an account of the growth and prospects of the

little church, which was situated midway between Bayard's estate and that of her brother.

Helen and Harry had arrived in advance, and were on the steps to welcome them and to reclaim Mabel, whom Harry boasted it was no slight generosity in them to have relinquished for so long a period. As the church was situated at the junction of four different roads, in a part of the country where the farms were large and the population scattered, there was but one service during the day, and that proportionately prolonged. The simplicity with which it was conducted, however, the earnestness of the preacher and the attention of the audience, made the occasion both profitable and interesting, and effectually beguiled Mabel of all sense of weariness. Within sight of her, in a neighboring pew, were her humble friends, the Hopes, clothed in their Sunday attire, and decked in the smiles which bespeak cheerfulness and content. Preëminent among them was Jack, now Mr. John Hope, one of the pillars of the church and the township; his tall figure, modified features and shining suit of broadcloth, rendering it difficult to identify him with the shabby urchin of former days. Madam Percival's pew was a little in the rear of Harry's, and Mabel, who had followed her brother and Helen into church, while the old lady and Bessie were still lingering in the porch, had for a time lost sight of her friends. Their vicinity was soon made evident, however, when the congregation joined in the opening hymn; for never had the rich voice of Bayard, which had power to enchain select audiences, and make the wild prairie ring with its full, clear song, sounded so melodious in Mabel's ear, as now, that it was consecrated to a sacred service and led the voices of the multitude in a united chorus of praise.

The numerous vehicles which surrounded the church during the service, had at its conclusion nearly all driven off, crowded with occupants, while our little group of friends still loitered to bid one another farewell and petition for a future interchange of visits. Mabel's box had been transferred to Harry's rockaway, which together with Mr. Percival's carriage stood before

the door, and the horses being restless, the ladies made haste to exchange their last words.

"Bessie forewarned me, Miss Vaughan," said Percival, while handing Mabel down the steps, "that it was hopeless to urge a continuance of your visit to my mother; but as Harry and Mrs. Vaughan give me the freedom of their house, I hope I may soon have the pleasure of seeing you again, in my character of a friend and neighbor."

Mabel frankly replied, that nothing would give her greater pleasure. Harry, who overheard the remark, endorsed it by grasping Bayard's hand and exclaiming with generous warm-heartedness, — "Let us see you as often as possible my dear fellow — I have no patience with that law term which has engrossed so much of your time of late;" and Helen's sweet smile was premonitory of future welcomes on the part of one who had none of the jealousy of her husband's friends which is sometimes attributed to young wives. A moment more and both carriages were off on different roads, which stretched across a plain so level and so uninterrupted that at the distance of nearly two miles Mabel could clearly distinguish a handkerchief which Bessie was waving in her hand as a farewell signal.

But Mabel had yet to learn what is was to be a friend and neighbor in the sense in which Bayard understood those terms. Though for six years a resident of the West, which is truly a country of gigantic distances, she had never believed it possible that ten miles of space could be so practically annihilated, as was instanced during the few following weeks, when, if Bayard's and Harry's estates had been but a stone's throw apart, they could not have been more strictly pronounced within the limits of good neighborhood. It was not that Bayard's promised visits were regular or prolonged, or that the attractions of the house were suffered to interfere with the young man's ordinary occupations. On the contrary, his landed estate had never required more active superintendence than at present; when the harvesting was yet to be completed, and those marks of negligence which had escaped even the careful Owen's observation were to be rectified, under the discriminating eye of the master;

while, in addition to his cares at Lake Farm, the business of his profession in the neighboring city frequently called him thither.

But, although his agricultural and legal labors were performed with promptness and efficiency, and his mental and physical powers were taxed to a degree which would have exhausted an ordinary man, he still found time and opportunity for that social enjoyment which constituted his highest recreation; deeming a ten miles ride, whatever might have been his previous fatigue, a light penalty to pay for half an hour's intercourse with congenial minds. It was true, he came and went at such odd, uncertain seasons — astonishing the household equally by his arrival and departure — that such surprises became familiar, and they scarcely realized the number and frequency of his visits; still, as they looked back through the weekly calendar, they could not but be reminded that there was scarcely a day, some portion of which had not been gladdened by his cheerful voice and smile. Whatever might be the object which called him from home, he was sure to take them in his way; and even when summoned to the city, which was in the opposite direction, he more than once contrived to make a circuit which brought him to Harry's door; thus proving the truth of the old proverb, that "the longest way round is the shortest way home." If Mabel went out to ride, as she frequently did on Helen's white pony, still a cherished favorite of its mistress, she was not unlikely to come back attended by their gallant neighbor; and, on one occasion — when she had accompanied Harry into the woods — and been left by him in a shady retreat while he explored a more distant part of the forest, she was unexpectedly joined by Percival, who seated himself on the pine-strewn ground at her feet, caught up the book from which she had been reading, and conversed with her for nearly an hour upon literary themes, with the air of a man never more utterly at leisure to play the agreeable; then mounting his horse, which had been fastened to a tree, rode off to meet a distant appointment, at the almost fearful rate of speed rendered unavoidable by his voluntary delay.

With Madam Percival and Bessie, Mabel's intercourse was

necessarily much restricted by the intervening distance, which they could not ignore as Bayard did; and except on one or two occasions, when Bessie drove over with her uncle and passed an evening, and once when Mabel accompanied Helen to return Madam Percival's visit, there was, for a fortnight or more, no personal communication between the ladies of the two households. It was scarcely possible to realize any barrier of separation, however, so long as Bayard continued the medium of their reciprocal friendship; and, although he often made his appearance under circumstances seemingly fortuitous, Mabel could not but consider him as in some sort the representative of her aged friend, and even attributed to her partiality many of those evidences of kindness and attention for which she was in reality indebted to him alone.

It seemed, indeed, an understanding in the household, that Bayard's visits, and his evident enjoyment in them, should be a subject of no surprise, and should be attributed to no partial or ulterior motive.

If Harry observed their frequency and questioned himself in reference to their object, he never betrayed his thoughts, even to his wife, merely remarking with an air of self-congratulation, "It is so gratifying to be able to return some of Percival's hospitalities, and make him happy in our home!"

If Helen, through the power of an exquisite tenderness, saw more than met the eye, and suspected far more than she saw—that same tenderness forbade her, by word or look, to ruffle even the surface of Mabel's feelings; and remembering how, through long years, her own unspoken attachment to Harry had received a sister's silent sympathy, she reverenced the heart's sacred secrets, and guarded them as if they had been her own.

And if Harry and Helen generously refrained from disturbing the quiet current of her thoughts, by so much as an embarrassing suggestion or whispered inuendo, Mabel was still less disposed to interpret in her own favor, those daily visits and civilities, which, however gratifying they might prove, she deemed a valued privilege of the common household.

The time had been, when vanity and self-love would have lent a more flattering construction to anything so marked as Bayard's evident partiality for the society which her brother's house afforded. But the bitter experience of Mabel's early womanhood, and the chastening influences of succeeding years, had effectually guarded her against the indulgence of vain and delusive imaginations; and it was no part of her present character, to assume for herself any distinction, or claim for herself any especial title to regard.

Thus, while every circumstance of their daily intercourse served to increase her esteem for Percival, and exhibit his personal and social traits in a new and attractive light, she never even dreamed of establishing any exclusive ascendancy over a heart which seemed to be world-wide in its benevolent sympathies. He might enter with animated and eager interest into her favorite studies and pursuits; but was not this characteristic of him in whatever society he might be thrown? He might omit no opportunity of rendering her a service; but was not his simplicity of manner so tempered with chivalrous gallantry, that he would have done the same for the humblest of her sex? He might express no slight anxiety concerning her health; but could he do less in the case of one who was at once his friend's sister and his mother's friend? It must be confessed, too, that although leaving it wholly to Bessie to avenge her cause, Mabel could not quite forget the unfavorable nature of Bayard's early impressions concerning her. And if now and then she experienced a conscious sense of elation, at some involuntary tribute of praise from the truthful lips which were guiltless of flattery, the emotion was instantly checked by the thought,—"it is but an endeavor to atone for past censure,—a confession wrung from him by a sense of justice."

But while Mabel indulged no ideal visions of conquest or of power, and was innocent as a child of any attempt at influence or display, the friendship, which was the natural growth of gratitude and respect, became daily more and more an element of her being; and, in an atmosphere free from every restraint, it was enjoyed without check or hindrance.

Thus, it was with unaffected pleasure that she greeted Percival, with undisguised regret that she saw him depart; and with confident, though serene anticipation, that she looked forward to his speedy return; deriving calm enjoyment, meantime, in the society of Harry and Helen, entering cordially into all their interests and schemes, and never attempting to analyze the sources of that perfect contentment and repose, both of body and mind, which were gradually restoring her to her wonted health.

One evening, Harry, who had been to the neighboring city, returned home at so late an hour that Mabel had already retired, and did not see him until the following morning, when they met at breakfast. "I have news for you, May," said he, as she entered and took her seat at the table. His face was glowing with animation, and Mabel, observing it, eagerly inquired into the nature of the tidings.

"Nothing less," replied he, "than the promise of an exciting election. I found every body in the city engrossed with one topic, which was the nomination of a candidate for the vacancy that has lately been created in Congress by the sudden death of our representative. I never witnessed a more exciting scene than prevailed in the convention yesterday; not as usual, on account of party conflicts and politicaldisputes, but because the whole assembly were so enthusiastic in their opinions and their choice. There seemed to be but one heart, one voice, one mind among them, and the unanimous vote was welcomed by an almost deafening round of cheers. I only wished the nominee could have been present to hear the applause which accompanied the proclamation of his name."

"I hope he is a worthy subject of their enthusiasm," said Mabel.

"You can judge for yourself," replied Harry. "He is no other than our friend Percival!"

It would have been difficult to discover, amid the mass-meeting of the day before, a more deeply interested and delighted countenance than that which Mabel turned upon her brother at this unexpected announcement. There was a dan-

cing light in her eye, and a smile of proud satisfaction in her face, which fully expressed her sympathy with the vote of the people; while her astonishment found expression in the words: "Is it possible, Harry? But I had no idea that Mr. Percival thought of entering political life, or that he had any taste for it."

"I believe both his thoughts and his tastes to be wholly averse to it," said Harry, "and I am by no means sure he will accept the nomination."

"That would seem a pity," remarked Helen, "he would be such an honor to the State."

"True," said Harry; "there is not a man in the commonwealth who could carry anything like his strength and ability into the counsels of the country. But, if he relinquishes his present mode of life to enter upon a political career, I am confident that it will be at a great personal sacrifice. I was one of a delegation who waited upon him last evening, to inform him of his nomination. We found him quietly reading law in his office, and I assure you he looked positively pained when he learned the object for which he was sought. 'Mr. S.,' said he to the gentleman who was the spokesman of our committee, 'I was never more completely surprised, and, I may almost say, troubled, than I am by your communication. I am very much flattered at being thought worthy to fill this vacancy in Congress, but a political office of any kind is a thing which I have never desired, and certainly have never sought.'

"'We all know that, Mr. Percival,' said Mr. S., 'and that is the very reason why we and the district at large will be satisfied with nobody else. 'Give us a man,' our honest back-country people say, 'in whom we can have confidence; one who would scorn to buy our votes, and who will never sell his own conscience or the nation's rights, for any political or party bribe. Give us a man of whom we can say, 'He will support the weak, and maintain the right, and be just towards all! We are united as to measures, but we are no less so in respectto him who is to maintain them — and we want our man.'"

"I saw that Percival was moved. He passed his hand

across that broad, white forehead of his, and then rose and walked up and down his office. Mr. S. and some of the other gentlemen continued to urge their point in the same strain; alluded to the critical state of the times, and the anxiety of every thoughtful mind to see the district represented by one who had the confidence of the people, and was so universally popular that he might remain long in the chair of office and be a permanent pillar of the public welfare.

"Percival listened respectfully and courteously to every thing they had to say; thanked them, and promised that he would inform them of his decision to-day."

"And you think his reply will be in the affirmative," asked Helen, while Mabel wore an earnest, thoughtful expression of countenance, but said nothing.

"He gave us no encouragement," said Harry: "and I confess I am at a loss with reference to his probable decision. There can be no question that great issues are at hand in our national counsels, and that, in no generation more than the present, have such men as Percival been needed at the seat of government. At no other time, and in no other way, can his eloquence, wisdom, moderation, and fearless disinterestedness be made so available for his country's good. Still, when I remember his passionate love for the free life of the West; the enthusiasm with which he has sketched out future improvements; the adventurous spirit with which he undertakes distant explorations; the zest with which he engages in a sportsman's pursuits; and the independence with which he has ever held himself aloof from the clash of party strife and political conflict: I must acknowledge (and Harry shook his head doubtfully) that it is hard to picture our friend setting out for Washington, to be cooped up for the greater part of the year within the contracted limits of a dull city, and condemned to the toilsome routine and hotly-contested controversies of congressional duty, upon which, if he engages in them at all, he will enter with all the faithfulness and ardor of his nature. I confess that, viewing it in this light, I shall not wonder if he shrinks from the sacrifice; —shall you, my dear?" and he glanced at Helen, inquiringly.

"I scarcely know," said Helen, as she at this moment looked up, while a smile overspread her face which was not intended for her husband. "I will not venture an opinion until I have heard him speak for himself."

"And you, May?" said Harry, who, not following the direction of Helen's eye, failed to comprehend her arch and meaning smile, — "you know the whole story, and I see by your face that your mind is made up, whether Percival's is, by this time or not. Will he stay or go?"

"If I know him in the least," said Mabel, with a firm and unhesitating air, "he will go at any sacrifice."

At this instant Harry caught the expression of Helen's face, and turned abruptly round in his chair. Mabel also looked up, and directly behind her, in the doorway, stood Percival, his face flushed with exercise, his riding boots bespattered with mud, his fine hair tossed back from his forehead, which was resting on his hand, as he stood leaning against the door-frame, — and his eyes, now that she had turned her face, fixed full and expressively upon Mabel.

"My dear friend!" exclaimed Harry, springing from his seat and grasping Bayard's hand, "you are very welcome! You have come to breakfast, I hope!"

"No, not to breakfast, Harry," said Bayard, glancing apologetically at his spattered boots, and slightly resisting Harry's hospitable endeavor to draw him to a place at the table. "I scarcely know for what I came, since I have only a moment to spare. Advice, sympathy, encouragement, I believe, were what I felt the want of; I have obtained them all, though somewhat clandestinely, I fear, and now I must be on my way again. Harry, have you the address of the gentleman who was the chairman of your committee yesterday? I forgot to take it, and I must write to him when I reach home. — Yes, thank you, Mrs. Vaughan," continued he, in reply to a proposition from Helen that he should at least take a cup of hot coffee; — "I will with pleasure, if you will let me have it standing." And while Harry went to look for the address, and Helen ran to a cupboard in the next room for a cup and

saucer, he approached Mabel, who, in her confusion, had forgotten to even bid him good-morning, and said, at the same time taking her hand: "I trust you are not displeased, Miss Mabel, at my overhearing your remark; if I had one doubt left in regard to my duty, you have laid it at rest; and believe me, I will endeavor not to disappoint your kind confidence, for which I am the more deeply grateful, that it is far beyond my deserts.

"I should not have spoken with such decision if I had known by whom I was overheard," said Mabel, with a smile, which, though embarrassed, denoted anything but displeasure; "still, I am not disposed to retract."

"You have no need, in this case," said Percival, "for I will prove your words true; though since my decision has your approval, the sacrifice will be comparatively light."

There was neither occasion nor opportunity for any further remark, for Harry had by this time returned with the address, and Helen, also, brought the coffee, which Percival swallowed hastily, then bade them all farewell, and in a moment more was off on his homeward road.

"Mabel," exclaimed Harry, laughing heartily as he sat down to finish his breakfast, "I think the convention should assemble once more, and tender you public thanks for the spur you have given to their future representative. I suppose," added he, "we have seen the last of our candidate for some four weeks to come; he will be so much occupied in view of the approaching election." And Harry, for the first time, cast a mischievous glance at his wife, which the dear, kind-hearted Helen pretended not to see, and took care not to return.

But whether this prophecy of Harry's was made with playful irony, or in all seriousness, its falsehood was not long in being proved; for while he canvassed the county, and brought home daily reports of Percival's universal popularity and undoubted triumph, and Mabel indulged prophetic visions of his future eminence and usefulness in a public career, the young man himself, after writing his letter of acceptance, appeared

to give himself no further thought in the matter; but, leaving the fortunes of his election in the hands of his constituents, devoted himself with increasing assiduity to those other pleasures and cares, which had their source and centre, not in the field of political agitation, but in the domestic circle of his friends. And, as day after day found him still faithful at his post of allegiance, Harry and Helen were tempted to whisper to one another, under the strictest pledge of secresy, their mutual and growing suspicion, that, though indifferent to public favor, he was the ambitious and self-appointed candidate for higher honors than the people had power to bestow; and that he had almost forgotten his popular election, while bending all his powers to win for himself the pre-eminence in one priceless heart.

CHAPTER XL.

I from the influence of thy looks receive
Access in every virtue, in thy sight
More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were
Of outward strength.

MILTON.

IF there is one season more than another, which, in its moving associations, appeals to the American heart, and finds there a sure response, it is that of the annual Thanksgiving. Originally a New England festival, almost the only one established by our pilgrim ancestors, and therefore, perhaps, the more highly honored, it has now become a welcome and hallowed institution in every part of our wide-spread land, where New England's sons and daughters have found a home. Sacred to family and social ties, gathering the scattered members of the flock into one fold, awakening the liveliest emotions of gratitude, and touching the heart's secret springs, it is to the young a period of unmingled pleasure and excitement, to those in middle life a time of zealous and disinterested effort to promote the common enjoyment, and to the old, a season of solemn musings, touching memories, and immortal hopes.

It had been the cherished wish of Harry and Helen, as well as the expectation of the whole family, that this anniversary, now close at hand, should be celebrated at the house of the young couple; and their friends at Lake Farm had been cordially invited to join them there. But when Madam Percival learned that old Mr. Vaughan, his sister, and grandsons, intended to prolong their visit during the whole of Thanksgiving week, she lost no time in presenting an urgent request, that on the actual day of the festival she might be

permitted to welcome their united family circle under her son's roof.

"It is the only way, my dear sir," said she, in a note which Bessie wrote to the elder Mr. Vaughan at her dictation, "in which I can be enabled to participate in the pleasure of the occasion, as a recent attack of rheumatism forbids my travelling at this season; nor would I suggest such an exposure to yourself after your recent severe illness, but I am assured that you do not fear to brave even winter weather, if spared from breathing the evening air; and, as our accommodations are ample, we should insist upon your all spending the night at Lake Farm. It is long since I have been privileged to collect a pleasant circle about me on this most interesting of occasions; but by the memory which you, as well as myself, cannot fail to entertain of many happy Thanksgivings in our New England homes, let me beseech you to make my cause good in your children's estimation, and gratify both my son and myself by your company on Thursday."

Harry and Helen, upon the receipt of this note, were disposed to resist such an invasion of their claims. Sabiah demurred greatly at the thought of accepting an invitation, which was none the less formidable to the timid, retiring woman, from Madam Percival's being dimly remembered as the sympathizing friend of her girlhood. Mabel seemed a little embarrassed at the idea of this change in the family plans; and the boys' faces were full of eager expectancy and doubt. Mr. Vaughan, however, at once put an end to all hesitation, by exclaiming with cheerful gallantry, "We can not possibly refuse, Harry; do not say a word, my dear Helen, the excellent lady must not be disappointed;" and the honored head of the house, having thus promptly expressed himself in Madam Percival's favor, all acquiesced in his decision, and an affirmative reply as dispatched to the general invitation.

As if to facilitate the views of all parties, and give added spirit to the events of the day, a light snow fell during the previous night and hardened to a smooth, crisp surface, making admirable sleighing. According to an agreement entered

into in anticipation of a snow-storm, Bayard drove over in the morning, in a covered vehicle which had been put on runners the previous winter for his mother's convenience, and returned with Sabiah, Mr. Vaughan, and Helen, while Mabel, now restored to her usual health, accompanied Harry and the boys in an open sleigh; and all were borne rapidly over the level prairie, to the cheerful sound of bells. A warm house and a warm reception awaited them on their arrival; dinner succeeded, with its social joys and abundant good cheer; other entertainments, for young and old, presented themselves in due course, and the hours wore pleasantly on.

It was now twilight of the festive day, and a happy and animated group were assembled in the parlor at Lake Farm, which, partially illumined by the long lines of light that streaked the western sky, and still further cheered by the huge wood fire which shed abroad its fantastic and fitful glare, presented a rare picture of cheerfulness and comfort. In a large arm-chair on the right, sat Mr. Vaughan, his hoary hair and attenuated figure still marking him as one who had not been left untouched by time and disease, but his face, glowing with a peaceful and even joyous serenity, which proclaimed that newness of life into which the old man had been born again. Near him might be seen the venerable mistress of the household, with her soft, white hands folded on her lap, the snowy folds of her muslin neckerchief, and the flutings of her widow's cap, contrasting with her dress of rich black satin, and her whole attire adding, as far as anything foreign to herself could add, to the dignity and grace of her noble person. Sabiah, too, had found her niche in a corner of the opposite sofa, had recovered from the awe with which Madam Percival had at first inspired her, and learning to recognize in her the beloved Miss Bayard of her school-days, had settled herself into a composed attitude, and now formed one of the aged trio, who were watching the more youthful members of the company and participating in their enjoyment.

They were all in high spirits, having just returned from an expedition to the farm-house of Owen Dowst, where they had

been since dinner, according to invitation, to attend the baptism of the little Rose, purposely appointed for this day, that the occasion might be honored by their presence.

The pleasing incidents attendant on the ceremony, the brisk walk over the frozen and glistening snow, and their animated satisfaction in each other's society, had given a fine glow to their faces, and loosened their voluble tongues. Helen, always keenly sensitive to cold, and rejoicing in the bright blaze which greeted them on their return, had seated herself on a low footstool between Aunt Sabiah's corner of the sofa and the wide hearth-stone, and with her hand locked affectionately in that of her old friend, was the very picture of sweet and gentle content. In front of the sofa stood Mabel, her beautiful face lit up with the fire-light, while she entertained her aunt with a spirited account of the afternoon's proceedings; Alick on one side, assisting her to deliver with faithfulness, a torrent of respectful messages, of which Lydia had made her the bearer; and Murray, leaning over the arm of the sofa, and now and then aiding the interest of the narrative by his graphic and witty allusions.

And while Sabiah listened attentively, and uttered many an ejaculation of astonishment, at Lydia's good fortune, Bessie, on her part, was exciting the gratified smiles of Mr. Vaughan and Madam Percival, as she recounted with that spice of playful exaggeration for which every one knew how to make allowance, the simple honors, which, in connection with the christening, had been paid to Mabel, Bayard, and the boys, quite to the exclusion, as she declared, of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Vaughan and herself.

Harry and Percival, in the meantime, were stationed outside the rest of the group, in the recess of a window, the latter divided between his close observance of Mabel's varying expression and his attempt to explain to Harry the principles of a new reaping machine, just invented by Mr. John Hope, and for which the ingenious young man was about to take out a patent.

At this moment horses' hoofs were heard crackling the crisp

snow beneath their hoofs, as they came up the avenue; and in an instant more a figure on horseback shot rapidly past the window. It is John, my man, said Harry, with no little earnestness in his voice and manner. I sent him to the city this morning; he has probably just returned." And thus speaking, he went hastily from the room to meet his messenger, leaving Bayard at liberty to consult his inclinations, and, if he pleased, join the little group collected round the sofa. He did not do so, however, but remained immovable in the recess of the window, while, had the room afforded a stronger light, a slight flush of anticipation and excitement might have been seen to mount to his temples; for although the rest of the company had either failed to observe Harry's messenger, or were unconscious of the tidings which he brought, Bayard himself was well aware that the next moment would be to him one of political defeat or triumph.

No one present was ignorant of the fact that the previous day had witnessed the casting of the electoral vote, in which Bayard had so deep an interest. But it had not been thought possible that the result could yet be determined; and although all hearts beat with expectancy, silence had, by common consent, been maintained on the subject, and it had been suffered to interfere as little as possible with the Thanksgiving festivities.

The committee, of which Harry was a member, had, however, adopted such energetic measures for obtaining the returns, that, in spite of the snow-storm and the obstacle it proved to their efforts, the exact result of the election had been proclaimed in the city less than two hours before, and Harry's messenger, who was on the spot for the purpose, had been at once dispatched by the chairman, to announce the intelligence to the successful candidate. The eagerness which shone on the man's face, no less than the abruptness of Harry's manner and words, had at once betrayed to Bayard the nature of his errand; and, whatever emotions this knowledge excited, they were still in full force, when Harry, who had apparently scarcely had time to receive his despatch from the hand of the man, rushed back into the room, and, waving the document triumphantly above

his head, came forward, with all the warm-heartedness of friendship, and grasped Percival by the hand, exclaiming, "Let me be the first to congratulate you, my dear fellow, on this glorious victory!" and then glancing at the official communication before him, he read aloud the statement of Bayard's election by an overwhelming majority.

The tide of feeling which had agitated the hearts of the little company, in view of the approaching crisis, and which had swelled to a fuller flood in proportion as it had been forcibly suppressed all day, now burst forth without restraint; and Bayard was at once surrounded by eager, excited faces, and greeted on every side by a chorus of congratulations. Nor, though seemingly less excited than the rest, was he the man to be insensible or indifferent to these evidences of sympathy and affection. The popular demonstrations, the eager acclamations of the tumultuous crowd, could have no power to move him, as did these simple tokens of social friendship and family love; and he responded to each with cordial and unaffected satisfaction, while, as he felt the soft pressure of his mother's hand, a tear started to his eye, which did no discredit to his manhood.

But there was one satisfaction, and that the greatest, which was wanting to him in this his hour of triumph; one voice, and that the one most powerful to stir his soul, which alone was silent; one form, which, while all the rest pressed eagerly forward, still lingered in the back ground. Yes, strangely enough, while every one else was emboldened or inspired to some characteristic expression of delight, Mabel, hitherto zealous in her friendly partizanship, seemed to be suddenly struck dumb. Once, indeed, as Bayard's unsatisfied eye wandered round the little circle, it met hers, fixed full upon him, with an eloquent, answering glance; but her heart drooped as she encountered his earnest gaze, and the next moment the whole face was hidden from him, as she hastily withdrew into the shadow afforded by her brother's tall figure.

Both the silence and the quick retreat were involuntary, however; and if this apparent coolness and reserve were painful

to Percival — they were no less so to Mabel herself. For a few moments, indeed, she had stood, intently watching the countenance of the young man, as he received the congratulations of the rest, quite forgetful that some similar demonstration might be expected on her own part; nor was it until she encountered his searching glance that the consciousness flashed upon her, that she had as yet given no expression to her sympathy in the universal joy. She would then gladly have repaired the omission; but the very intensity of her emotions checked and forbade their utterance. There was a quick beating of the heart, which she found it impossible to subdue; and her instinctive retreat, beyond the outermost edge of the little circle, was but the natural impulse of a sensitive mind, which shrank from betraying its own unseasonable and vexatious embarrassment.

Here, secure from observation, she strove to recover her composure; nervously watching a favorable opportunity for addressing the hero of the occasion, and vainly endeavoring to frame her thoughts into suitable words. But while she thus waited and delayed, a new turn was given to affairs, Bayard was suddenly summoned from the room and the opportunity was lost.

A delegation of citizens had just arrived, having come hither to rejoice over their victory, and shake hands with the popular young representative. The confusion of tongues which had prevailed in the drawing-room was now superseded by the loud shuffling of feet on the verandah, the violent ringing of the door-bell, and the tumultuous and eager voices of the throng, who, met by Bayard at the threshold, eagerly tendered their congratulations and received his acknowledgments in return. The sudden withdrawal of both Harry and Percival, consequent on this arrival, and the sound of laughter and conversation proceeding from the dining-room, on the opposite side of the hall, into which the new comers had been ushered, had the effect of composing the little family circle into a thoughtful, listening attitude; and one after another they resumed their seats, and a comparative quiet reigned throughout the room.

In a retired corner, a little apart from the rest, Mabel mused with her own thoughts, and gave ear to the occasional dialogues which took place around her, seriously vexed, meanwhile, at her own inability to assume a natural and unconstrained air, and wondering whether, in the general excitement, her own individual deportment had been observed and commented on.

No observation could be more critical or severe, however, than that which she exercised over herself. "What is the meaning of this, Mabel Vaughan?" was her inward interrogatory. "Who can be more pleased than you with the result of this election? You have scarcely thought of anything else for two or three weeks past; it has been the object and end in which all your hopes have been centred; nowhere has the young candidate found a more zealous champion; from no one could he reasonably anticipate warmer sympathy and congratulations! You certainly are very, very glad of his success! Why not tell him so, then, in those frank, simple terms which are all that the occasion demands, and which would be sure to be understood?"

Why not? Indeed, she could not answer the question satisfactorily even to herself. She would have given worlds, had they been at her disposal, rather than that Bayard should suffer a defeat. Still, the announcement was so sudden — it involved so much! Perhaps she realized more than others the responsibility that rested upon the young man — the bias that was to be given to his whole future life. Perhaps she took into the account, that it was an event not merely of private, but of national interest. Why, otherwise, should she have experienced that quick beating of the heart which effectually forbade her utterance? Yes, she was glad, very glad, that was a question which did not admit of a doubt. But she could not speak so lightly as the rest did on a matter of such grave concern — she could not so readily subdue the emotions which an event of such serious moment was calculated to excite.

The voice of Mr. Vaughan was now heard amid the general silence, gravely remarking to Madam Percival: "These political constituents have snatched our young friend from us at an

interesting crisis; but this little circumstance only illustrates the general truth, that private friendship must yield to the call of public duty; nor must we complain of our personal loss in view of this election, since it introduces your son upon an arena where he is sure to play a worthy part. I congratulate you, Madam, with all my heart, upon the honors which he has achieved to-night."

"I have never coveted any higher honor for my son," said Madam Percival, in reply, "than that which belongs to every man who faithfully does his duty. I thank you most sincerely, my dear sir, for your friendly sympathy. But new responsibilities are a new test of character and ability; and, as a parent, I almost shrink from congratulation until such a time as Bayard shall have proved that this is indeed a true occasion for it."

"The past, however, is, to a great degree, prophetic of the future," replied Mr. Vaughan; "and you will not forbid me to wish you joy, that there is in the young man himself such good foundation for a people's confidence and a parent's hopes."

"I will not deny, sir," said Madam Percival, with a placid smile, while her eye glistened with a maternal pride which could not be wholly concealed, "that now, as always, I find in this my highest satisfaction; and, to do Bayard justice, I believe that his aims are pure, and his strength of will indomitable. I pray God that he may be found as wise as I know him to be brave and true."

"Who can doubt his fitness for every emergency?" thought Mabel, as, while she watched Madam Percival's face, she felt her own heart swell with a pride none the less deep, and far more ardent than that which now sent a sudden glow to the aged woman's cheek. "Has he not nobly fulfilled every trust reposed in him as counsellor, brother, son, and friend! The mother may modestly disclaim the laurels which yet await his brow; but what honor is there in the nation's gift which we may not hope one day to see him wear? How thankful we should be, and how rejoiced we are, that the public have claimed him as their representative, and have destined him to an elevated and conspicuous career."

This thankfulness, this joy, however, were not of the same serene and placid character as Madam Percival's. Perhaps they were none the less generous, none the less sincere, that another, and in some degree, rival emotion, now and then asserted itself, and was only kept down by the vehemence and resolution with which Mabel strove to convince herself that the occasion was one of perfect and unqualified satisfaction. This honorable and public service might imperatively summon its votary from the domestic circle,— it might engross his time, to the exclusion of all minor claims. She did not need her father's suggestion, to remind her that private pleasures may sometimes clash with public duties; for the thought had flashed upon her in the very moment of Bayard's victory. But what then! Was there one among his friends so cowardly as to shrink from the sacrifice? Was there one so selfish as willingly to detain him a moment from his post? one so mean as to estimate personal loss against the public gain? Reason proudly answered in the negative; but a pang shot through her heart at the question; a sigh was the only audible answer; and while joy sat on her countenance, her spirits waged an inward war.

"I have been in the dining-room, where the gentlemen are!" exclaimed Murray, approaching the spot where she sat, and speaking in a tone of exultation. "There are as many as fifteen or twenty, standing round the fire, talking with Mr. Percival and Uncle Harry. They are all so triumphant and delighted about the election! it's capital fun to stand by and listen. Come, Al! come in and hear them!" and he hurried his brother away.

"How gratifying the presence of these friends must be to Mr. Percival!" thought Mabel, as through the open door, by which the boys left the room, she heard the indistinct murmur of voices, and pictured to herself the animated scene. "How great must be the zeal which prompted them to a ten miles ride on this wintry night! What staunch and true supporters they will be to him in the future! How closely their interests will be allied to his! How mutually confidential will be the rela-

tions existing between them! What a pleasant excitement their arrival adds to the other events of the evening!"

Such were Mabel's sentiments; the only sentiments, at least, which she acknowledged, or of which she was distinctly conscious. Why then that undefined sadness which crept over her, as she mentally contrasted the partially deserted drawing-room with the well-filled apartment at the other extreme of the house, where Percival gave reception to his political guests? Why that distinct remembrance which darted into her mind, of her aunt Sabiah's late denunciation of men engaged in public life, and her assertion of its proverbial effect in weakening social sympathies and ties? Why the restless tapping of her little foot on the carpet as she impatiently awaited the departure of the district committee, and the sense of weariness and discontent with which she mentally ejaculated—"How long they stay!"—then secretly glanced at her watch, adding, as she did so, "only eight o'clock! I thought it had been nine."

These latter shades of feeling were, however, but an undercurrent, and were outwardly veiled by her usual calm and cheerful demeanor, to which she had been restored almost immediately upon Bayard's leaving the room; nor, whatever might be the source of her secret uneasiness, could it be attributed to any conscious yearning for the society of the absentees; for when, at length, the gentlemen from the city took their departure, and Bayard and Harry hastened back to the drawing-room, she seemed disconcerted rather than gratified by their presence, and lost no time in ensconcing herself behind the tea-table, in one corner of the apartment. Here, she begged from Madam Percival the privilege of making tea for the company, an office which she performed in silence and with methodical precision; nor did she leave her place of retreat until Percival was seated at the piano in the adjoining library, and nearly all the rest had resorted thither for the enjoyment of some music.

So closely do national and familiar airs interweave themselves with associations of the past, that on the anniversary of Thanksgiving scarcely any one could fail to express some preference or ask for some favorite tune. Thus Bayard was de-

tained long at his post, and Bessie, whose catalogue of songs was as exhaustless as her good nature, maintained her place beside him, turning over the leaves of the music book and accompanying him with power and spirit, while Harry, as occasion offered, aided them with his deep bass voice. Helen, to whom the day had been fraught with many a tender memory, waited patiently until the rest were satisfied, and then in a tremulous tone begged that Percival would open the organ and play upon it one or two sacred anthems which her father had dearly loved, a request which Bayard with his usual prompt courtesy immediately complied with.

Mabel meanwhile, still courting seclusion, had entered the room with a noiseless step and seated herself in an ample bay-window at the extremity of the apartment, in which sheltered nook, partially screened by some heavy old-fashoned draperies, she might enjoy the music undisturbed. Her attitude was scarcely that of a gratified listener, however, as she sat gazing fixedly out on the smooth shining surface of snow, and now and then pressing her aching head against the cool glass. Once or twice, indeed, she might have been seen to start, as if the chorus of a joyous glee grated harshly on her feelings; but with these exceptions, she seemed scarcely conscious of the protracted concert save as it afforded her a welcome opportunity of undisturbed thought and repose.

At length there was a pause in the music and Mabel, although insensible to the ordinary conversation which had been going on around her, distinctly heard Harry remark to his friend, — "we shall miss you sadly, Percival, this winter. I suppose you will be obliged to leave for Washington next month."

"I cannot tell — perhaps not until January," — replied Bayard in an under tone, — then added emphatically and with compressed lips, "perhaps immediately."

The last word only reached Mabel's attentive ear. It struck cold upon her heart. Involuntarily she repeated it to herself. It seemed to give form and shape to those vague and undefined emotions which she could not comprehend and would fain have crushed. "Immediately!" was the thought which forced itself

upon her — "the fiat has gone forth, and he must obey the call without hesitation and without delay. He must turn his back upon the home which he loves and the friends to whom he is so justly dear. They will no longer hear his cheerful voice as he enters the house unexpectedly at dusk, nor listen to his horse's feet as he retreats in the distance, nor count upon his aid when in difficulty or need, nor enjoy his books, nor have the benefit of his advice. The woods and prairies will moan him in silence; even his horse and dog will miss him; his departure will spread a cloud over the landscape, only to be dispersed by his return.

"It is true he goes on a noble errand; he will serve the cause of humanity and the best interests of his country; he will give her his time, his efforts, his affections; he will meet with a just reward; he will be honest, beloved and happy; but we — "

Alas, she could deceive herself no longer. Exultant, proud, and thankful she might endeavor to be in this his hour of triumph; but she could not be blind to the fact, that the shadow which his departure would fling upon all nature was reflected most deeply on her own heart; that others might regret the absence of a friend, but that for her, the sun of her life would be gone down.

As thus painfully self-engrossed she peered tremblingly into that night of the spirit, which was threatening to overtake her, she failed to observe that the library had become well-nigh deserted of its occupants, who one by one had received their meed of satisfaction from the music and had returned to the drawing-room. The organ still gave forth the soft, long-drawn strains of a beautiful symphony, and the pathetic minor tones, keeping pace with her train of thought, were listened to almost unconsciously. Not until they were suddenly brought to a close, therefore, and a solemn silence succeeded did she become aware that Helen, who, overcome by the music, had been the last to leave the room, had inadvertently closed the door behind her; that the candles attached to the organ were extinguished, and she and the organist were the sole inmates of the quiet library, now lit only by the pale light of the moon,

which was streaming through the window at which she sat. Her first impulse was to steal noiselessly away; her next, to wait in her place of partial concealment until Percival, who was closing the organ lid, should have preceded her, but both schemes were rendered equally abortive, for, so far from leaving the room after shutting up the instrument, Bayard folded his arms and with a deliberate air walked straight to the window to look out into the night. She started at his approach, and with a fluttered air was hurrying past him in silence, but, though scarcely less disconcerted than herself at his discovery (for he believed her to have spent the entire evening in the drawing-room), he arrested her with the words, — "Do not go," — at the same time standing aside to let her pass.

She stopped — checked not so much by his words as by the power of his mild blue eye, which was fixed upon her with a gaze at once penetrating and persuasive.

"I did not mean to intrude upon you," said he, as she stood hesitating and irresolute "but since I am here, indulge me for a moment."

He would have taken her hand to detain her, but she would not trust it to him, conscious that it trembled; and without appearing to notice the movement on his part, she voluntarily resumed her place in the window.

"You are the only one of my friends who has not congratulated me to-night," said he, as he seated himself beside her. "I was half disposed at first to reproach you with indifference, but on second thoughts I thank you rather for sparing me such a mockery."

She repeated his last word in a questioning tone, at the same time looking up at him for an explanation of its meaning.

"Yes, it is a strong term," continued he, with a vehemence of manner unusual to him, "but congratulations from your lips would have seemed to me scarcely less than a mockery to-night. Others might be blind to the truth, and their well-meant words might be both acceptable and sincere, but I would fain flatter myself that you understand me better, that you do me the justice to believe, that the events which outwardly wear a flattering air,

have caused me nothing but pain — that no sentence of exile or banishment could be more bitter than this unwelcome summons, which calls me away from everything that is dearest to me on earth."

There was a tremulous depth to his voice as he thus spoke, such as Mabel had never heard in it before. It almost startled her. She felt his eye fixed piercingly upon her; but, without daring now to look up and meet it, she faltered out, "Harry said it would cost you a sacrifice."

"Harry! What does he know of it? What does any one know?" exclaimed Bayard, with an impetuous, almost an impatient gesture. "Who but myself can measure the pang it costs me? I do not look for sympathy! I am stung with congratulations! But you," and his voice changed to one of almost feminine tenderness and appeal, "you, who by your holy confidence in my sense of right strengthened me for this task, — you will not at least refuse to wish me God-speed?"

"I? Oh, no!" replied Mabel; and then added, hesitatingly, and scarcely knowing what she said, "I — I wish you every thing that is good."

"And you will shrive me before I go?"

She answered only by looking timidly, anxiously up at him; then her glance wandered quickly round the room, as if she meditated making her escape.

"Yes, let this be my confessional," said Bayard, his words following fast upon one another, as if he understood her intention and would not be frustrated in his own purpose. "I may not depart with a light heart, but I would at least carry away with me an easy conscience. I would disburden it of a weight which has laid on it ever since the evening we first met, when, in the blindness of a false and hasty judgment, I spoke, and you overheard the unworthy words, which were repented of as soon as uttered. Can you, will you, forgive me for the blindness, the presumption, the folly for which I have never forgiven myself? Can you deem it a sufficient atonement for my fault, that your first reproachful glance convicted me at once of injustice and libel · that it has haunted my memory

ever since; and that I can not be at peace, as long as its shadow is upon my heart."

"And is that all?" said Mabel, breathing more freely, while a pensive smile overspread her face, as memory, which had failed to treasure up the wrongs of that eventful evening, led her back to the contemplation of the never-to-be-forgotten benefits which Bayard had generously rendered her in her hour of need.

"No, it is not all," exclaimed he, with a returning vehemence and fervor, which he struggled with, vainly endeavoring to be calm. "You overheard me, when I rashly undertook to interpret the character which I had neither the wisdom nor the charity to read aright. I beseech you, then, to listen—to have patience with me—to believe me, when I tell you, that the lesson of goodness, beauty, and truth which you have been teaching me ever since, is such as to make me ready to hide my face and exclaim, 'So, this is your cold, artificial, worldly woman! Never trust yourself again, Bayard Percival.'"

"Mr. Percival," said Mabel, her calmness partially restored, as she saw how much Bayard was moved, "you wrong yourself and me, when you waste so much regret on words spoken at random, and forgiven, I assure you, as promptly as they were truly atoned for. If my mind often recurs to the evening of which you speak, it is not to dwell on my own wounded vanity, but on a kindness which touched me to the heart. Do not ever think of the occasion again, unless you should some day be tempted to doubt that I know what it is to be grateful."

Her voice shook and quivered as she uttered the last syllable; and, once more impelled to take refuge in flight, she sprang from her seat and would have darted from the room. But Bayard was on the watch. Something in her manner had led him to anticipate the movement, and, starting up, he caught her by the hand.

"Stay, Mabel—stay," cried he, in a voice of deep emotion, while the eyes, usually so mild and gentle, seemed to emit a burning light as he fixed them full on hers. "You must not—you shall not go. I have made but half my confession yet.

Hear me for a moment only, and then, if you bid me, I will depart and you shall never see me more."

She stopped short—mute, transfixed, and statue-like. Even the hand, which had shaken with a nervous tremor, ceased to flutter, as he held it in his firm grasp. There was something awful and impressive in the agitation of this strong man, usually so calm and self-possessed; and Mabel's heart almost ceased to beat, as she observed how his broad chest heaved, and his lips refused to give utterance to the thoughts which were working within. But when they came at last, those words of pathos and of power, they seemed to sweep through all the chambers of her soul, penetrating to the very seat of her life, and telling of a love as mighty and strong as the heart that had conceived it was elevated and noble. With all the simplicity and ardor of youth, with all the eloquence and force of mature manhood, did he plead his cause, pouring into her ear the story of a deep and true affection, which had implanted itself in the fibres of his nature more than six years before, and had silently and secretly taken root in the generous soil, to expand and blossom at last in the sunshine of her presence and her smiles.

"I have loved my Western home with a boyish enthusiasm," exclaimed he, at length, as having poured forth the tale of his hopes and fears, he scanned her colorless features, and in their marble-like pallor and rigidity could not as yet read his answer. I have rejoiced in the freedom and independence of my unshackled life; I have shrunk from every thing that had a tendency to win me from my favorite pursuits. Still, I could have broken away at the call of duty; I could have looked even exile cheerfully in the face, and dared fortune to do her worst, glorying in my native strength. But it is so no longer. My resolutions are weaker than any child's; my courage fails me in the most critical moment of my life. I dare not say but that I should have evaded the present call, had not your generous confidence urged me on. But now there is no drawing back. I must break up the habits and associations which have come to possess a nameless charm; I must bid farewell to the spots round which your image will forever cling. Duty bids me

depart; and you, too, echo her voice. O Mabel!" His tone was low, sweet, and full of touching earnestness, as he made this final appeal. "O Mabel! must I go alone?"

The heart which had seemed to stand still, while Bayard unfolded, with passionate fervor, the indwelling secret of his strong love, vibrated with sudden motion as his impetuous words thus gave place to low, half-whispered entreaty; the blood which had seemed to ebb away in a cold, stagnant stream, rushed back in a warm, living current, and the long suppressed, subdued, and hidden emotion of Mabel's soul was stirred into sudden life. It was no blind sentiment,—no transient preference, which thus lay treasured in the inmost recesses of her being; it was a holy and pure affection, born of gratitude, nursed by time, strengthened by respect, and perfected by that union of habit, principle, thought, and feeling, which moulds two hearts into one. It lay deep, and she had concealed it well; so well, that until now she herself had suspected but half its power. The time had come, however, when it could be repressed no longer. She felt it in the trembling agitation which, commencing within, vibrated through her whole frame, until she tottered where she stood; she betrayed it in the hot, rushing tide which suffused her neck, her cheek, her brow, with crimson, and tingled to her fingers' ends. She could not speak, but she laid the hand that was free on the hand which Bayard still firmly held; he clasped them both in his, and was answered. The nervous agitation which caused her to tremble like an aspen leaf, was subdued and tranquilized as she felt herself folded in his strong embrace; and the heart which had been schooled by experience, purified by suffering, and ennobled by patient endurance, realized that it had found at last its true, its perfect earthly rest.

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And what did they all say when Mabel's engagement was announced? for engagements must come out, and everybody must say something.

It did not come out until the next day, for Bayard returned to the drawing-room at length without his promised bride, who

was lost to the family for the remainder of the evening. Murray went to look for her, being anxious that she should witness a brilliant aurora which was visible in the north, but returned to say, that he feared Aunt Mabel had a headache, as she did not open her room door, but begged him to excuse her to Madam Percival and the rest of the company.

When she awoke, however, the following morning, she found her venerable hostess sitting by her bedside. "Good morning, my dear child, — my dear daughter!" said she, leaning over her, smoothing the hair back from her forehead, and kissing her tenderly. "Bayard has told me all, — it is as I have fondly wished, — I could ask no better comfort for my old age. My son will be very happy, and you — excuse a mother's partiality, but you will have a husband worthy of you."

Mabel sprang up and threw her arms round her dear, respected friend. "Oh, the blessing," exclaimed she, with tearful eyes, "of knowing, for the first time within my recollection, what it is to claim a mother's love!"

"Your union with Bayard, my dear," said the old lady, "will but set a seal to the compact which my heart made with you long ago. You are mine by adoption, no less than by his choice; it is sweet to me to feel that my affections went out instinctively to meet the daughter soon to become mine by a most holy tie;" and once more pressing Mabel to her bosom, she hastened from the room, to recover the composure which this interview had sensibly disturbed.

"Come with me," said Mabel to Bayard, who had been pacing up and down the hall, just outside her door, and was, consequently, the first person whom she met when she left her room. "Come with me to my father."

The old gentleman was an early riser, and, as Mabel had anticipated, was up, and sitting alone in front of the library fire. He laid down his spectacles and book as his daughter and their youthful host entered the room together, and gazed at them with no little surprise, for they had the earnest look of persons with a positive object in view. Mabel went behind his chair and whispered in his ear. He looked round at her, half incredu-

lously, then bestowed an earnest, inquiring glance on Percival. "You will be to her the friend that she deserves?" said he at length.

"I will, Sir, with God's help," answered the young man solemnly.

"Take her, then," said the father, rising from his chair, and laying a hand on the head of each. "This is unexpected to me, but not unwelcome. If, having been a good daughter is any security that she will be a good wife," continued he, addressing Bayard, "you will never repent your choice. God bless you both."

"Two elections in one day, you lucky fellow!" exclaimed Harry, who came in at the moment, and understood at a glance how matters stood. "I give you joy! and I hope it will not be considered in any degree disparaging to the district which you represent, if I remark, that I consider the last victory you have achieved greater than the first, and a more worthy subject of rejoicing, not only for your sake, but, for that of my dear sister, and of every one who has her happiness at heart.' Though Harry addressed himself to Bayard, his look of affection was fixed on Mabel, whom he drew towards him as he finished speaking, and clasped in a fraternal embrace.

"I hope you will both be as happy as we are, Mabel dear," whispered Helen, who had followed her husband into the room. "I can offer you no warmer wish."

Bessie now made her appearance in a state of great excitement. She had learned the news from her grandmother, and her delight, which was, no doubt, extreme, was almost lost in the excess of her astonishment. "I never was so cheated in my life," exclaimed she. "I am provoked, beyond all patience, to think what a game you have been playing almost before my face and eyes, — and I as blind as a bat to the whole thing! Why! isn't anybody else astonished? I want to know," and she gazed inquiringly from one face to another. "I thought you disliked my uncle, Miss Vaughan," said she in an expostulatory tone. "I thought you had an old grudge against him. And so you, Uncle Bayard, propose uniting yourself to an ice-

berg, after all?" Bayard smiled. Bessie saw that her cutting allusion failed to exercise its accustomed effect. "Mabel has forgiven me," said Percival. "Your tongue, my little Bessie, has lost its power to wound."

There was a marked contrast in the manner with which the boys received the announcement. Murray shouted with joy, and civilly asked Madam Percival's leave to give three cheers. Alick scanned Percival's face with as keen and anxious a scrutiny as if he would have pierced to his very soul, kissed Mabel impulsively, rushed from the room and (he was sixteen years old, and a tall boy for his age, but, nevertheless, it must be confessed) he wept.

"Well, now," said Sabiah, whom Mabel sought, and informed privately of the event, "you don't mean so! Upon my word it's so sudden I don't know what to think! Why, you never saw him more than half a dozen times in your life, — did you, Mabel?"

Mabel confessed the frequency with which they had met during her visit at Harry's.

"La's sakes! Then all the time other folks have been electioneering, and so on, he's spent his time a courtin'. Well, he's a fine young man; I never had anything in the world against him, except his being so mixed up with politics; and if he has neglected his public interests, as they say, after this fashion, to play the agreeable to his lady-love, I'm thinking his wife will never be second best whatever may turn up; so I guess the heart you've won you're pretty sure to keep against all odds!"

And Sabiah was right; for with Bayard Percival to love once was to love forever.

CHAPTER XLI.

I have seen one, whose eloquence commanding
Roused the rich echoes of the human breast,
The blandishments of wealth and ease withstanding,
That hope might reach the suffering and oppressed

And by his side there moved a form of beauty,
Strewing sweet flowers along his path of life,
And looking up with meek and love-lent duty;
I called her angel, but he called her, wife.

ANON.

It was near the close of a December day. Mr. Vaughan and his family had been now for some weeks re-established in their home, and Mabel, who, amid manifold cares and occupations, had secured one half hour of leisure, had seated herself for the last time at her little desk, in front of the familiar window which commanded a view of the wide-spreading prairie. The light busy foot of Helen was astir in the house, the voice of Melissa might be heard now and then in the adjoining kitchen, in the elated and authoritative tone of one who magnified her office. The boys were passing to and from the barn, taking a final look at their favorites among the flocks and herds, and giving their parting charges to farmer James. Everything gave token of some great event near at hand, some thorough breaking up of old ties, some grand migration among the household. The little sitting-room, however, was quiet and peaceful; business and preparation might prevail outside, but neither were permitted to intrude into this domestic sanctuary, where Mr. Vaughan and his sister sat in their accustomed arm-chairs, before the fire, while the old house-dog was asleep on the rug. For a moment or two Mabel retained a thoughtful attitude, with her head resting on her hand, her eyes now straying over the wide wintry landscape

without, now fixed with tender interest upon the picture of serene repose within the room; then taking up a pen, she bent over her desk and wrote the following letter: —

"Dear Mrs. Herbert: — When I look back to the days of my childhood, there ever arises before me the image of one dear friend, whose tender love and devoted care made it a blessed and happy portion of my life, on which memory loves to dwell. When I consider the years which have since intervened, I can not fail to be reminded, that at every step I have been counselled, strengthened and cheered, by the advice, the warnings, and the lessons of this same dear friend; and now that I am about to enter upon a new sphere of duty, I feel an instinctive yearning to still claim a place in her good wishes, her affection, and her prayers. You have cherished the child, encouraged the woman — let me bespeak your loving sympathy for the wife. It does not become me to say much of him to whom, to-morrow, I expect to stand in this new and near relation. Some day, I trust, you will see and know Mr. Percival, and be enabled to judge for yourself. But if genuine simplicity and true manliness of heart and life entitle a man to honor, I may well be proud of the station which he holds, both independently, and in the world's opinion; and if strength of Christian principle is the surest foundation for confidence and trust, I may well believe that the sentiments which he now professes are sincere, and will be lasting. I trust I have not said too much; but indeed, dear Mrs. Herbert, my only fear is that I am not worthy to be the object of his choice; and it is that I may become so, that I chiefly beg an interest in your prayers. Bayard (for you will wish to know him by his Christian name also) is the son of Counsellor Percival, as he was usually called, a lawyer, formerly of high standing in New York city, but now for some years deceased. His widow is still living, vigorous and active, although nearly seventy-six years of age. She, too, is well known in New York and elsewhere, for the active part she has taken in every philanthropic and benevolent scheme; nor does she, even at her present

advanced period of life, feel herself excused from exertion, or unfitted for active duty. You will realize this, when I tell you that she has recently taken a house in Cambridge, with the view of furnishing a home for two of her grandsons, now students at Harvard, and that she has invited Alick and Murray also to become members of her family. No proposition could have been more opportune, so far as the boys are concerned; for Alick hopes to be prepared for admission to the University at the commencement of the next collegiate year, and Murray could nowhere pursue, to such advantage, the mathematical studies which are to fit him for his chosen profession — that of an engineer. At first, we all opposed the plan, fearing Madam Percival was assuming too much care; but she over-persuaded my father and Harry, convinced me that she anticipated only pleasure from the charge, and finally carried her point.

"I could have wept, as on my last visit to Lake Farm, Mr. Percival's residence, she half playfully, half solemnly, resigned to me all her responsibilities there, at the same time assuring me that nothing but her unwillingness to leave Bayard alone, prevented her from carrying into operation, nearly a year before, this cherished plan for the benefit of her grandsons. My capacity for filling her honored place at Lake Farm is not at present to be put to the test, as Mr. Percival has recently been elected member of Congress from this district, and we are to set out for Washington immediately after the marriage ceremony. My dear father will accompany us. I could not endure the thought of being separated from him; and he, on his part, seems to find pleasure in the prospect of a winter at the seat of government, where I hope that the milder climate will strengthen his constitution, and that the interest which he already begins to feel in the debates will employ his mind agreeably. You will be glad to hear that he has quite relinquished all business and pecuniary cares, and is in the enjoyment of a contentment and serenity which it is delightful to witness. Aunt Sabiah is to spend the winter with Harry and Helen; but next summer will, I trust, restore her to me; for

I shall never relinquish my claim to this beloved member of our family. It is a fortunate circumstance for us, that, after half a dozen years of persevering effort, Melissa has at last succeeded in bringing farmer James to the point. They were married, with no little parade and ceremony, during our absence at Thanksgiving time, and will probably continue to occupy the house and the adjacent land for as many years as they see fit.

"To-morrow, therefore, will be an eventful day to us all; a day when, not I alone, but all the rest of the household, will be called upon to bid farewell to that Western home, which, humble as it is, has become to us a dear and honored spot, and will be cherished in years to come, as the blessed haven of rest, which afforded us a safe and welcome shelter from the storm of adversity and trial. Blessings on its bare white walls, its plain brick hearth, its low-roofed rooms! they have taught us that happiness is independent of ornament; that contentment brings joy to the humblest fireside; and that love knows no limits and often expands the widest in the narrowest space. We may go the world over, and view with admiration its monuments of grandeur and pride; but our grateful hearts can never forget what we owe to our prairie home.

"I take great pleasure in the thought, that in the approaching spring or summer, the claims of love and duty will probably call us to New England. I shall then hope to see you once more, my dear and honored friend. Meanwhile, believe me now, as ever, your tenderly attached,

MABEL VAUGHAN."

In that hour of sweet anticipation and happy imagining, fancy might well robe the future in its fairest colorings, but the hope expressed in the latter clause of Mabel's letter, was, nevertheless, destined to disappointment. Not many weeks after the receipt of these welcome tidings from her beloved pupil, Mrs. Herbert met the great summons which awaits all the living, and when Mabel, at length, visited the home of her childhood, it was but to weep over the grave of this early friend.

Not less vain too, was her fond trust, that change of climate and scene might tend to strengthen and prolong the life of her venerable parent. Mr. Vaughan's health was too much enfeebled to admit of anything more than a temporary improvement, and, although he rallied during the winter, and evidently reaped both pleasure and benefit from his residence in Washington, spring found him wasting under a slow disease, and when summer came he was like a shock of corn fully ripe. Serenely, quietly, peacefully, however, his long life drew to a close; and in his daughter's beautiful Western home, surrounded by those whom he loved, soothed by their tender offices, and sustained and cheered by a calm and heavenly hope, he gently passed away.

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"Harry," said Percival, one evening when the two friends were sitting on the verandah at Lake Farm, "I think I have heard you say that you formerly knew Lincoln Dudley."

"Yes; I knew him well," replied Harry; "what of him?"

"I saw to-day, in looking over the passenger list, that he had sailed for Liverpool in the Canada. Poor fellow! he is still restlessly striving, I suppose, to get away from that worst enemy — himself."

"As if it were possible," responded Harry, "to break loose at last from the object of nearly forty years assiduous devotion! Or, if he could succeed, what a void the world would necessarily present to the man who never had a hope, or an aim, which had not ultimate reference to his own benefit."

"I have seldom known a more complete instance of perverted and wasted powers than may be witnessed in Dudley," said Percival. "J——, an old class-mate of his, gave Mabel and myself, last winter, a truly pitiable account of his condition. It seems he has become a most wretched dyspeptic; weighs his food with scrupulous exactness, limits himself in respect to exercise and fresh air, and analyzes his physical symptoms with morbid accuracy. His once brilliant intellect is thought to be seriously impaired, and there is every prospect of his becoming a complete hypochondriac."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Harry; "what a melancholy picture his case presents! What an object of compassion he has become; and what a warning!"

"Yes," replied Percival, "there could be no more striking proof of the fact, that refinement, self-culture, and polished address, are worse than useless, unless accompanied by earnest faith, manly purpose, and generosity of heart. Dudley was at one time my father's ward, and an occasional inmate of his house. I well remember the admiration which his talents and accomplishments excited in me as a boy; and I have often heard my mother regret the selfishness and vanity which had been early encouraged in him, and which were so fostered in succeeding years as effectually to steel him against her own and my father's counsels. He is an example of a class, unfortunately too common in the world, who with the fairest prospects before them, nevertheless make shipwreck of their own fortunes, and exert an influence upon others as disastrous and fatal as it is fascinating and insidious."

"How he would once have ridiculed such a specimen of humanity as he now presents!" said Harry, musingly.

"Yes," said Bayard; "but 'where fools may laugh, wise men can only weep.'"

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As if to prove the fallacy of earthly longings, and manifest the mysterious working of God's providence, in less than a year after Mr. Vaughan's death, the long-talked-of road — to which the old man's thoughts had in vain turned, as the iron-bound link between his past and his present fortunes, the pathway to better days, the only hope for his own and his children's future — ceased to be the vision of soaring imaginations, and became a solid reality. The schemes and plans which had wearied the brain of the hoary man, and the failure of which had well-nigh broken his heart, were at length brought to a successful fulfilment, without the aid of his mediation; and the waste lands of the wilderness became, in time, a noble patrimony to Harry, the young Leroys, and Mabel. Not, however, until Harry's good resolutions, his firm self-control, his patient

industry, had been tested by years of privation and labor; not until Alick and Murray, one in classical pursuits, and the other in more practical studies, had won their meed of praise, nobly resisting the temptations of youth and laboring with the ardor inspired by necessity and self-dependence; not until Mabel, amid the cares which she assumed as a wife, and the responsibilities attendant upon a new scene of action, had proved herself worthy of a man whose aims were as exalted as his life was useful; and not until her noble husband had found, amid competence and frugality, a happiness to which money could bring no increase, and had earned among his fellow-men a high and honorable position to which wealth could add no dignity.

To follow Mabel in her after career would be to anticipate the future. Her lot is but that of humanity; and time, while it serves to ripen and perfect her joys, must bring with it changes, anxieties, and sorrows. It may lead her through pleasant and flowery paths; it may call her to mount the hill of difficulty, and drink the bitter waters of affliction; but may we not have faith to believe, that every circumstance and every change will serve to minister to her final peace, and that earth's short pilgrimage will prove the pathway to an eternal rest? Yes, to her, as to all who early learn life's holiest lesson, pleasure is henceforth sanctified, anxiety relieved, and pain and disappointment robbed of their bitterest sting; while, alike amid the sunshine and the storm, the purified heart sees God,—sees Him not only as the Almighty Judge, but as the Infinite Father, the source whence all those sweet affections flow which illume, and strengthen, and redeem the world: and seeing Him, believes that all the varied dispensations of His providence are alike good, since all flow from the hands of One who afflicts but in mercy, who wounds but to heal, and who, amid all life's varied discipline, is ever proving to the eye of Faith that His banner over us is Love.

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